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THE
PRIDE OF ANCESTRY:

OR,
WHO IS SHE?

A Novel.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY MRS. THOMSON,

AUTHOR OF

EXCESSIVE SENSIBILITY — FATAL FOLLIES —
THE LABYRINTHS OF LIFE—GERALDINE—
AND ROBERT AND ADELA, &c.

VOL. I.

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THE

PRIDE OF ANCESTRY:

OR,

WHO IS SHE?

IT was in the last week of the gloomy and dispiriting month of November, that the sober village of Carleton was roused from the general stupor that pervaded its monotonous course, by the death of one of its principal grantees. The housekeeper at Holmby Lodge had received a letter from the steward in town, informing her, that on that morning Lady Eleanor Levet had departed this life for a better, and

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B

that

that Miss Moore, her ladyship's friend and companion, had ordered him to write to Carleton, to inform her of the great loss they had all sustained, and to desire that the house might be ready for her reception, as she proposed being down on the second day after the receipt of his letter. He added, that the remains of her ladyship were to be brought down in great pomp to Holmby Lodge, where the corpse was to lie in state till the evening, and then to be interred by torch light.

Mrs. Hall no sooner read the letter than she took off her spectacles, crying "Well! I wonder who is to be my lady's heir, and whether she has left her fortune to the young Earl of Clifden: for we were never troubled with family visitors in my time. However, I'll soon know." She forgot even the affectation of grief in her great haste for information. She was quite alone:
therefore

therefore a shew of sorrow would have been lost time. She put on her hat and walked with much importance, through the village, to communicate to the rector the intelligence. But here, poor woman, she came too late: for a letter had been dispatched by Miss Moore, to inform Dr. Jackson of the irreparable loss she had sustained, by the death of her much deplored friend Lady Levet.

Mrs. Hall was ushered into the parlour, where sat the doctor and his lady in close chat, on the subject of her visit. Here the housekeeper did not fail to exhibit the proper ensigns of woe. She pulled a nicely folded cambrick handkerchief out of her pocket, and, before she spoke, after a profound curtsie, burst into tears. The rector's lady catching the sympathetic tone applied her handkerchief also to her eyes. The rector himself broke the

awful silence. "So! Mrs. Hall," said he, "we have lost her ladyship, as Miss Moore informs me!" This roused Mrs. Hall, who was full of indignation, that Miss Moore did not think her worthy of a letter also. "Yes, Sir," replied she, "I came to inform you of the tidings, but I find Miss Moore's grief has not been so great but she could put pen to paper. The steward wrote to me. Pray, Sir, can you inform me who is Lady Eleanor's next heir." Here Mrs. Jackson dried up her tears, or at least the semblance of them, and replied, "Why, Mrs. Hall, I rather think her heir is abroad: he is a very gay, dissipated young man." "Well," returned the housekeeper, "indeed, it is no matter of mine who he is, for I have only been twelve months in the family, and if her ladyship had lived to return, I should have given her warning, for she
was

was never satisfied with any thing."

"Ah, poor woman" said Dr. Jackson,

"she was never satisfied herself, nor indeed do I believe she ever caused any one to be satisfied with her."

"My love," replied his wife, "you know we should never speak ill of the dead."

"Truth may be spoke, madam, at all times," replied the housekeeper, with her eyes turned up toward heaven.

She was afraid this remark of the rector's lady might preclude her from hearing some anecdotes of her dead lady, of which she was most anxious to be informed. "Ay, ay, Mrs. Hall,"

returned the doctor, "so it may, for if we may not say the truth of the dead, of whom may we speak it?"

A message from Mr. Boyle, a neighbouring gentleman, importing that whenever Dr. Jackson was at liberty, he would be glad to see him, broke up the discourse, and Mrs. Hall took her leave, in hopes

that she should be more fortunate in spreading the news of her lady's decease in the village where Miss Moore could have no correspondence; as she well knew there was none of the inhabitants allowed to approach, even her ladyship's companion.

Mrs. Hall repaired to a shop, dignified by the board over the door, with the title of a grocer's, but which would have been more properly called a chandler's, as there you might be supplied with earthen ware, bacon, cheese, ribbands, candles, gauzes, and a long train of *etceteras*, which would fill a large sheet of paper. In this shop the mistress reigned the petty tyrant of the village. Here the poor must be satisfied to be cheated, or not be trusted; nay, they must not be difficult in the choice of the articles of which they were in want; if they were, the goods were folded up, and they were told
they

they might get them elsewhere. Now Mrs. Gurnet knew that this elsewhere was eight miles distant, and they must go there with money in their hand, whereas she was so indulgent as to trust them from Saturday to Saturday. Mrs. Hall happened to arrive at Mrs. Gurnet's just at that period of time when her shop was full of customers; one of which had expressed some disapprobation at the price of some checks which were intended for an apron to a little girl, who stood trembling at the contracted features of Mrs. Gurnet, who was grumbling that some people were never satisfied, and thought themselves gentlefolks: but it would be hard matter to make gentlefolks of them she believed. "What is the matter?" said Mrs. Hall, as she held the door in her hand. At the approach of so distinguished a personage as my lady's house-keeper, all gave way, and the counter

was cleared in a moment; the cottagers stood curtsieing at a distance. "What is the matter?" replied Mrs. Gurnet, "Why I am a tired of standing waiting shilly shallying with difficult folks; so they may come again when they knows their own mind, for they knows mine, and I wont bait a farthing, if it was to her good ladyship herself." Here Mrs. Hall's white pocket handkerchief was again displayed. "Don't talk of my poor deceased lady, Mrs. Gurnet!" Every one put on a face of astonishment, and Mrs. Hall's importance received a considerable addition. — Dead! echo'd every voice, though Mrs. Gurnet's was still the loudest. "Come hither, Sally," said she, to a little girl, who being a poor relation, served her in the double capacity of shop-woman and servant. "Mind these here folks, for I dares to say Mrs. Hall is in haste." With this she

she flounced into the parlour, followed by the lady from the great house. No sooner were they seated, than a little cordial was proposed by Mrs. Garnet, as no doubt Mrs. Hall must be greatly afflicted with the news: but, however, such things would happen to the great as well as the small; it was good for trade. "Why, you will all want mourning," said Mrs. Garnet. "Yes," replied her visitor, "but I am not thought of consequence enough to give orders about that, till Miss Moore comes; however, I shall not fail to put in a word for you. Did you ever hear who is to get my lady's fortune?" asked she. "Never," answered her friend, "some say one body and some another, for she has no very near relations living, as I believe; but never mind who gets it; they cannot do less good in the village than she has done. Her father was not like her; there was not a dry eye, when

10 THE PRIDE OF ANCESTRY; OR,

the old earl died, and I question if there will be one sorrowful heart on her ladyship's account." "Yes, but there will be one," said Mrs. Hall, "the poor girl, at the school at Harrowby. My lady sent me once to enquire after her, just after I came to live with her. She has kept her out of charity, ever since she was born; and she told me, her own self, that she never saw her in all her life, only she was daughter of a favourite servant, that died in her father's house." "Well," cried Mrs. Gurnet, "that is very wonderful, how people's good deeds do come out, after they be dead! I should never have thought her ladyship one of those to do good for goodness sake; but maybe, as she was so good, she may have left the poor girl something to 'prentice her out in the world. And now I thinks of it, I have heard formerly something, but people should not believe all they hears,

hears. I never does. It would not become trades people to canvass their betters. Come Sally, ar'n't those folks gone? we will have a comfortable dish of tea." Over this same tea, all that was known of the family in question was discussed. However, it ended in this, that the deceased lady was not in the good graces of either of the communicative friends; and they parted, after a little more of Mrs. Gurnet's excellent cordial, which she never took, she declared, but when some unexpected bad news had depressed her spirits..

Mrs. Hall began to make all the preparations necessary for receiving the corpse of Lady Eleanor Levet, with all possible state and decorum. She sent to all the tenants, requiring their attendance; and, to speak truth, never had a more welcome message come to them for many years. Holmby Lodge

had once been considered by them as a place from which they derived, and to which they gave consequence ; but since it had descended to its late possessor, they had never thought of it, except when waited on by the steward to receive the rents : for Lady Eleanor had left off the good old custom of her ancestors, always to entertain the tenantry on the first day of the year, when they cleared all accounts, and spent a jovial day ; after which they returned home, well satisfied with the goodness and condescension of their landlord. His approbation of the different experiments in husbandry, which they laid before him, always served to excite an emulation in each of them, that served in the end the purposes of both. Lady Eleanor said, “ That she could not attend to the vulgar nonsense of a parcel of uneducated men : if they chose to dine with the steward, they were welcome.”

come." This offer they all refused to accept at the Hall; but, at the same time they insisted that the good old custom should not be broken, and invited the steward to dine with them, at an inn, in the next market town. On this invitation, her ladyship put a negative. Thus ended all intercourse betwixt her and her tenants, who had for the last sixteen years paid their rents, and got receipts, without so much as enquiring after her health. This, however, the steward had concealed, as he was not, like most in his situation, fond of fomenting quarrels.

The important day arrived, when Miss Moore came to Carleton, to execute the orders of Lady Eleanor. Mrs. Hall received her with many submissive curtsies, and many affected tears. Miss Moore shed many tears herself; but they flowed directly from the heart: for though her ladyship had many faults

to others, she was strongly attached to Miss Moore. Indeed she had almost secluded herself from the world, for the last six or seven years of her life, and this lady was never out of her company. Mrs. Hall followed her into the parlour, where every thing put her in mind of her deceased friend, and she could not speak, so greatly was she affected. The housekeeper could interpret this no otherwise, than that she had found out that she was not remembered in the will, and was weeping at the thoughts how soon she should be deprived of so comfortable a home. Addressing herself to Miss Moore, she said, "I am sorry, madam, you afflict yourself so much; I dare say our good lady did not forget how good you have been to her, but has rembered you as she ought to do; do pray keep up your spirits." Miss Moore did not answer her, but by a look, which seemed to say retire, and
don't

don't be impertinent. On this she did as was wished, quitting the room muttering.

In about a quarter of an hour after Miss Moore, arrived Dr. Jackson, who spent the remainder of the evening at the Hall. When he was gone, the bell was rung for Mrs. Hall, and she was ordered to have every thing in readiness, early the next morning, for the reception of the remains of her ladyship. After this, Miss Moore retired to her chamber, though not to rest, to endeavour to compose herself, in order to be able to support the fatigue of mind she was to undergo on the next day. She had promised her friend to see the last duties performed; and was determined, most scrupulously, to keep her word.

At the expected time the cavalcade arrived, and was stared at by all the village. It was literally a holiday with every one, as all flocked to the Great House,

House, to be spectators of what every one thought a grand sight, without once deploring the loss of her, who, in her life, had never administered to their smallest comfort. In the evening the remains of Lady Eleanor Levet, followed by a numerous and respectable tenantry, and attended by Miss Moore, as chief mourner, was interred in the vault of her ancestors, in the parish church of Carleton.

As soon as Miss Moore returned from church, she desired Mrs. Hall to order the post chariot to be ready, by nine the next morning, and to hold herself in readiness to go in it some miles, with a letter which she should write. She then desired not to be disturbed, and retired to her own apartment.

CHAP. II.

THOUGH Miss Moore had desired not to be disturbed herself, she had left Mrs. Hall at perfect liberty to employ the intermediate time in whatever way she thought most agreeable. The house-keeper therefore repaired to her own room, where she found the steward, the butler, and the clerk of the parish, regaling themselves over some cold meat. The tenantry attended the corpse, as required, to the grave, but refused to go back to the Hall, as the steward requested them, saying, that when the heir arrived they would come and pay their respects, if not forbidden, and then departed to their respective homes.

Mrs.

Mrs. Hall took her seat at the head of the table, saying, "Well, Mr. Wells, I have hardly been able to say I am glad to see you, I have been so busy; but I am released now, for madam above, won't eat any thing; has she got e'er a legacy? I suppose not as she takes on so." "Then you suppose wrong," replied he, "for my lady would never let her want, I am sure." "Oh!" returned the housekeeper, "she has warmed your pockets I find." "There you are wrong again," said he, "for I never received a present from her ladyship in my life: but it does not become servants to speak ill of their masters or mistresses." The conversation now took another turn, and the new prospects of the family were discussed.

"How different in disposition was the

the last lady we buried from this house, from the one just interred?" said the clerk, "she was beloved by all the village." "Aye," replied the steward, "she died, poor lady, whilst on a journey in the prime of life. I was attending on the ladies when she was taken ill. I was dispatched directly home with the news, but before my return she was a corpse. The earl, her father, was confined with the gout here." "Aye," replied the clerk, "I remember the day, as if it was yesterday. On that very day week I lost a good friend myself, the young 'squire, Sir Giles's nephew: he left Carleton, and nobody ever knew for why; nor has he ever been heard of since." "So he did," replied the steward, "but 'tis said Sir Giles would not consent to his marriage with the girl of his heart." "And that's a terrible sad thing indeed," said Mrs. Hall, with a sigh.

"Why

“Why you sigh as if it had been your own case, were you ever in love?” asked he. “And if I was, is this a time to talk of such sort of things think you?” replied Mrs. Hall, “haven’t I got orders to set off, I don’t knows how soon, to I don’t knows where in the morning. Miss Moore seems to take upon her just as if she was my lady’s heir herself.” “Well, and who knows but she is,” returned Mr. Wells. “She, indeed! if that’s the case, and the wind sits in that quarter, she may be her own house-keeper for me: for I was always in the houses of people of quality, and shan’t serve such as her, I assure you.” “Why, in point of family,” answered the steward, “she was not deficient, being well descended, or my lady would have had nothing to do with her.” “Aye, aye, I thought as much,” said Mrs.

Mrs. Hall, "such sort of folks always furbish up some grand relations or other to stick their pride and consequence to; however, we shall soon see, as my lady's will is to be opened the day after to-morrow." With this she retired, and the party broke up; but not till the gentlemen of the second table, and even those of the lower order, had drowned all sorrow.

In the morning, at the hour appointed, Mrs. Hall attended on Miss Moore for her commands. She received a letter from her, directed to Mrs. Linworth, the governess of a school at Harrowby. This was the same place Mrs. Hall had been sent to by her lady about eight or ten months before. She therefore ventured to say, "I know Mrs. Linworth very well, and will take care and deliver the letter quite safe into her hands; but am I to bring any answer back?"

"Certainly

“Certainly, Mrs. Hall, you are to bring a young lady in the carriage.”

“Very well, madam,” answered she, “I suppose the poor thing my lady was so kind to, and paid her schooling?”

“The same, but she is no poor thing: an affluent fortune awaits her, Mrs. Hall. She is the mistress of this house, and all your late lady’s fortune, except the family estate, which went with the title to the young Earl.”

Mrs. Hall stood as if struck with astonishment. At length she uttered, “God bless me!” Miss Moore now reminded her that the horses were waiting, and that as the journey was somewhat long, she had better be gone as quickly as possible. She now was eager herself to depart, for Miss Moore, it was evident, did not intend to be more communicative, and Mrs.

Linworth

Linworth might make her acquainted with the contents of the letter which she carried. However, it was impossible to quit the house with the little glimpse of information of which she was then in possession, without going to the steward's room, and giving him a peep into futurity. Besides, she had no great dislike to this same steward, and if he had a mind to think as well of her as she was inclined to do of him, why she was determined not to let him be crossed in love, whatever she herself had been, as her conversation the evening before seemed to insinuate.

Mrs. Hall had set conjecture to work in the steward's room, and now ascended the carriage to carry the important tidings to Mrs. Linworth. Mrs. Hall had never before been honoured with a seat in the chariot, and she
took

took care that every one should see her as she passed through the village.

When the carriage stopped at Mrs. Linworth's gate, it caused much confusion amongst the girls; but as soon as it was found to be a coach and four, they all sat quietly down again, for none of the young ladies could boast of so fine an equipage.

Mrs. Linworth herself could not guess from whom she was going to receive the honour of a visit; but that it was the carriage of some person of condition she knew. She therefore hurried into the state parlour, taking with her one of her scholars, who she knew to be a proficient in music. She was set down to the piano forte, and Mrs. Hall was ushered in. Mrs. Linworth remembered her, as belonging to Lady Eleanor Levet. Compliments having passed, and Mrs. Hall being seated, she

she took from a red morocco pocket book Miss Moore's letter, which she presented to the governess. She watched Mrs. Linworth's countenance very narrowly, to see that surprise which Miss Moore had occasioned in her own, but she did not perceive any; for when the letter was read she folded it up, saying, "I am indeed greatly concerned for the death of her good ladyship. Miss Moore desires Miss Bellingham may return with you, madam. I hope we shall not lose her entirely. Surely the good lady has made some provision for the poor child."

Here she was interrupted by Mrs. Hall. "Why has not Miss Moore informed you that Miss Helen is my late lady's heir, and that she is to have all her fortune?"

"No, that she has not. Can it be true? Why I never knew that they were related."

“Nor I, neither,” answered the housekeeper, “but no doubt Lady Eleanor knew where the relationship began,” with a significant look at the governess.

“Very true, it is not for us to make inquiries; only I remember that the person who brought Miss Helen here, told me that her ladyship never saw her, and that it was purely out of charity she did that she did for the child.”

“May be so,” returned Mrs. Hall, “people seldom give estates away in charity; however, it will be proper to inform the young lady that I am come to fetch her.”

Here Mrs. Linworth rang the bell, and ordered Miss Porter, the teacher, to be called; on whose coming she informed her of the good fortune of Miss Bellingham, and desired that she might be sent into the parlour, whilst she should pack up her clothes. This last was no very difficult task, for Mrs. Linworth

was

was ordered to furnish only what clothes were absolutely necessary ; and in order to ingratiate herself into the good graces of Lady Eleanor, by her economy, she had given poor Helen a very scanty wardrobe.

Miss Porter returned to the school-room, truly rejoiced at the news she had heard ; for Helen was a very great favourite of her's, and she often had lamented that her rising genius, and the accomplishments which she was always emulous to attain, must be useless ; nay, perhaps have a worse tendency in the station to which she might perhaps be destined. The humble companion of Lady Eleanor, was that for which Miss Porter had considered her young friend as destined. She called Helen to her, and said, " I am seldom the messenger of good news to you, Miss Bellingham : you are going in that carriage, away from this house."

This was indeed good news to Helen: for she was of a lively and gay disposition: whenever her spirits had led her into any little irregularity, she was always reprimanded, and told that it did not become one in her dependant state, to put herself upon a footing with young ladies of fortune. This flattered the vanity of some of the other girls, and tended, at the same time, to keep Helen in a state of subjection.

“Am I, indeed, going out, Miss Porter? Who has been so good to ask a holiday for me? Am I to stay out all night? Will governess go along with me, or any of the ladies?”

“My dear Helen stop, or I shall never be able to answer all your questions. The carriage at the door was Lady Eleanor Levet’s—you are going to her house. She herself is dead”——

Here Helen burst into tears, saying, “then I have no friend in the world.”

“Many!

"Many! many, my dear. Come dry up your tears," replied Miss Porter, "for what do you think of that fine house and carriage being yours?"

"Oh, don't laugh at me, Miss Porter," said the disconsolate girl. "Where am I going, to strangers?"

The parlour bell reminded Miss Porter, that she was desired to send Helen thither. She assured her that to sport with misfortunes, was never her inclination, and she was happy to assure her, that she had been informed of the change in her condition by Mrs. Linworth, to whom she must go directly and hear it confirmed.

Helen soon dried up her tears: for she was no hypocrite. Lady Eleanor had never shewn any great act of kindness to her, more than in paying for her nursing and schooling, and, perhaps, once a year, sending some one to enquire for her. Her tears, therefore,
c 3 flowed

flowed for her own unprotected state. The assurance that this was not the case, altered considerably the features of Helen; and she entered the parlour like an April morn, smiling through a gentle shower of rain.

“Come hither, my sweet girl,” said Mrs. Linworth, who arose as she entered, and taking her hand, presented her to Mrs. Hall, saying, “this, ma’am, is the young lady.”

“Oh yes, I remember her well,” returned she, “but how much she is grown since I was last here. Won’t Miss be seated.”

Helen sat down, when Mrs. Hall told her all she knew: which was in truth no more than what Miss Porter had already informed her of. Helen longed to quit the parlour, and be at liberty to indulge her own thoughts, which were now all up in arms. Who was she? How came she to be so fortunate?

fortunate? Was it true? for she still had her doubts. However, youth did not long hesitate to accept the proffered good.

Mrs. Linworth soon dismissed her dear charming girl (as she fondly now, for the first time, gave her all these endearing appellations,) in order to prepare for her journey, and to indulge in conversation with Mrs. Hall, without the intrusion of a third person.

As soon as Helen quitted the parlour, where she was entreated soon to return, as Mrs. Linworth said, that if she remained too long above stairs, she might be apt to get cold; the two ladies drew their chairs nearer to each other. The one related and the other swallowed every jot of intelligence given her, from the moment Helen entered the house, till that in which she was about to quit it. After most

mature deliberation, it was determined, that the deceased lady was no better than she should be. But as nearly sixteen years had passed, and nothing of the how or the when had transpired, silence on the subject was by each reckoned the best policy, and they deemed it best to bow submissively to constituted authority. This they both agreed in, that Helen Bellingham was a very elegant and beautiful young creature. "A little wild or so," Mrs. Linworth said, "but possessed of an excellent heart; and, she dared to say, had an affectionate disposition." Of this she could only make a doubtful assertion, as, to do her justice, she knew that she had no pretensions to the affection of Helen; she had always treated her as an inferior in the school, and used her more as she might have done a half boarder, or a dependant on herself,

self, than as one who had a claim on her compassion by her deserted and almost unprotected state.

Helen herself, as soon as she quitted the parlour, flew to the playground in search of Caroline Archer, who had been her friend ever since she had resided at Harrowby. She had shared her joys and sorrows; in whatever little joys were in Caroline's power to dispense, Helen also had a share. All the girls flocked round her as soon as Helen made her appearance; some out of curiosity, and many out of envy. For this baneful passion frequently takes its first root in a boarding-school, where it always finds sufficient food; and when it is thus early sown in the young mind, seldom does reason and riper years totally eradicate the seeds. Every voice was directed to Helen with congratulations on her good fortune.—
“Thank ye! thank ye all!” replied
c 5 she,

she, “ but I want Caroline, where is she ? ” and she ran over every part of the space allotted for their recreation, but no Caroline was to be found, and Helen returned into the house in search of her friend. Her agitated mind found not where to rest till she had communicated the glad tidings to her who had always participated in every event in which she had been concerned. At length she found her in her own chamber, seated on a little trunk drowned in tears ; and here Helen seated herself by her side, and, without speaking, they sunk on each others bosoms. Caroline Archer spoke first :

“ Helen, don’t forget me ! I shall always think of you. I wish you had not been removed so far from us, or that I could only see you now and then.”

Helen dried up her tears, saying, “ Caroline, what makes you think so
ill

ill of me? What have I done that you can suppose I should forget the only friend I ever had in this world? What is to become of me I cannot tell: but this I will assure you, that no good fortune that happens to me will make me so happy as sharing it with you. Caroline, I know that you are not like me, a dependant on the bounty of another. You have parents to direct your steps through life. Alas! where are mine?" Here a second flood of tears relieved the two friends, who were called down to dinner. Mrs. Linworth sent word that Miss Bellingham was to dine in the parlour. She sent her respects to Mrs. Linworth, and begged permission to dine in the school-room with Caroline, as she was so soon to leave her. This brought an invitation to Miss Archer also, which was joyfully accepted by both the friends. They then talked over the story as far

as Helen could relate it, and concluded with mutual protestations of continued friendship.

For the first time since she had been at the school, Helen was indulged in dining in the parlour, and a request of a holiday for the rest of the ladies was graciously acceded to.

Soon after dinner, the servants were ordered to be ready; and when the carriage was announced at the door, Helen felt but one pang, and that was to bid farewell to Caroline. Mrs. Hall wished to have indulged her with the company of her friend; but as Miss Moore's orders did not extend to this, she comforted Helen with the hope that she would soon be able to invite whom she pleased to Holmby Lodge. Helen now took leave of her governess, and also of the girls, who stood in admiration of the elegant equipage, which, they were told, now was to belong to Miss Bel-

Bellingham. She embraced Caroline at the step of the carriage, and in a moment lost sight of Harrowby. Mrs. Hall, now in the highest spirits that she had got the young Heiress alone, began to describe the grandeur of the house, and the splendor into which she was about to enter. "Did you never in your life see my lady, Miss?" asked the inquisitive Housekeeper. "No, never," replied Helen. "Then with whom did you reside before you came to Mrs. Linworth's?" "I can hardly remember," returned she, "for I have been at Harrowby ever since I was four years old; only I know that they were very poor people, and that they had a little daughter called Mary about my own age, whom I loved very much. I have often enquired after her, but Mrs. Linworth told me it was against the express commands of my benefactress, that I should ever be permitted to see those

those who had brought me up. I thought it cruel, but I durst not dispute what were her ladyship's orders. Pray, madam, do you know what were my parents? Oh! how rejoiced I should be to find them living, and give them all the riches you have described as likely to be mine. But Mrs. Linworth says they are dead."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Hall, "I never heard any thing about them: only once my lady told me that you were the child of a favourite servant." Helen's pride received some small degree of mortification, to find that she sprung from so humble a stock. She said no more on the subject, but employed her time in thinking how she ought to behave before the lady who had been the friend of her late benefactress. After revolving in her mind what she should say, and how she should behave, she recollected that she had never enquired
if

if she was young or old, handsome or ugly.

Mrs. Hall, however, as they approached nearer to Carleton, said that Miss Moore was a very precise lady, and she advised Helen to be on her guard, as she did not know how far Lady Eleanor had put her in the power of this her companion.

“Then tell me pray,” said Helen, “is she ugly as well as ill-natured?”

“I did not say she was ill-natured, but I said she was precise. Miss Moore had the art of governing her who governed every one else; so, of course, she will expect to do the same by you. However, she is reckoned a woman of a superior understanding, though, for my part, I never could discover it.”

The spire of the church of Carleton now rose from amidst a tuft of trees, and Helen enquired “whether that
was

was the spot in which Lady Eleanor was buried. Oh what would I have given to have once beheld her before she died !” Mrs. Hall was greatly surprised at this exclamation. She thought it contained more than met the ear. “ Why,” thought she, “ should this girl wish to see my lady before she died, if she did not think herself attached to her beyond the bounds of charity.” “ Well, Miss, to be sure you have reason to respect the memory of the good lady, but you could not love one you never saw.” She answered, that was very true, she could not account why, but certain it was, she never thought of the name of Levet but with the highest respect and veneration. Here they passed a carriage full of young ladies, who all stared into the chariot, and Helen saw them laugh. “ There, Miss,” said Mrs. Hall, “ those young ladies will all be your friends in a day
or

or two." "I question if they will any of them ever be such," replied Helen. "I don't like them. Who are they?"

"Who are they! why they lets every body know who they are. There is nobody, within ten miles of Carleton, but can tell all about them. Squire All-right, the great City Banker, is known every where. The ladies in the carriage are, Miss Louisa, Miss Marian, and Miss Sophia, and then the young Squire—" Mrs. Hall was interrupted by Helen, who said, "pray how far are we from the Lodge?" "Why, Miss, dear me, don't you see it right before you?"—Helen's eyes had been long placed upon the house before her; but she did not like to be inquisitive. The house, which was built of Portland stone, stood on a gentle eminence, and was sheltered from the North winds by a wood, which rose in an amphitheatre behind it. As they passed through the village,

village, the cottagers stood at their doors, as it had been whispered, in the absence of Mrs. Hall, that she was gone to bring home the young Heiress, and all were anxious to get a peep at her. This was impossible, as the shades of the evening had advanced too far.—Helen felt her heart flutter as the gate-keeper let the chariot into the park. Mrs. Hall did not fail to give her a welcome, and in an instant the carriage stopped at the hall door, which was opened by the porter. As Helen alighted, Miss Moore advanced to receive her. Taking her hand, she burst into tears, and leading her up to the drawing-room, shut the door.

Mrs. Hall wished to have been of the party. This she did not dare to attempt; but she might make herself mistress of what information she could gather from the door of an adjacent room. She found that the key, in
which

which Miss Moore spoke, was not calculated to assist her curiosity, yet she heard the name of her deceased lady mentioned frequently. Tea and coffee being carried up, all conversation, of a private nature, was interrupted. Mrs. Hall quitted her station for her own room, where all those, who were admitted to the honour of a seat at her tea-table, were assembled, to hear what she had collected as to their young mistress, as they called her; not forgetting a kind of sneer and shrug when they mentioned Helen. "You are welcome home again," said the Butler, "if you have brought us any thing good with you."

"Where did you pick up our lady?" said the Steward, "and what do you think of her? Is she like anybody you have ever seen before?"

"Yes, yes, that she is," returned Mrs. Hall, "I have had many a word with a
person

person who is as like her as two peas. But what signifies what she is like, if she be good; though I seldom ever knew any good come of such as—— Well, handsome is as handsome does. She is a pretty creature for certain, and she is very affable.”

“Affable, indeed,” echoed every one, “What should make her proud? She did not expect the old lady’s fortune, that is certain. I dare say,” said the Steward, “she contrived to see Miss sometimes.”

“Then,” returned Mrs. Hall, “it must have been when she was in her sleep: for Miss told me she had never set eyes on my lady in her life. Yet she said she had a great respect for the name of Levet.”

They all agreed that this was natural, and as Helen was likely to be their mistress, they had best treat her name with the respect due to that station, whatever

whatever might be their own private opinion.

“She’ll have many a suitor,” said the steward, “when it is known that all my lady’s fortune will be her’s.”

They all agreed in this, that the young Earl of Clifden would be greatly disappointed. With many remarks and conjectures, none of which were at all conclusive, the meeting broke up in order to prepare for the supper of the ladies, who were joined by Dr. Jackson soon after tea.

This gentleman came at the request of Miss Moore, in order to settle the preliminaries as to the opening of the will of Lady Eleanor Levet, which was directed to take place on the next morning after the arrival of Miss Bellingham. He congratulated that young lady on her acquisition of fortune: for though this was not yet ascertained beyond

yond the possibility of a doubt, yet as Miss Moore had repeated assurances, during the last illness of Lady Eleanor, that Miss Bellingham was the indisputed heir to her possessions, and also had her express commands to send for her from school previously to the opening of her will, no doubt could be entertained as to the tenor of that will when it should be opened. Helen, who possessed both good sense and good nature, found it not difficult to make suitable answers to the doctor, and also to assure him, that she thought herself very fortunate in her situation, to have the counsel of two such friends, as she was unable to judge what was proper to be done ; and also to assure them, that she would implicitly follow their advice. Miss Moore declared, that she should always be welcome to her opinion to the best of her judgment. Dr. Jackson made the same declaration.

They

They endeavoured to amuse Helen till supper, with a description of the families with whom Lady Eleanor associated in her own neighbourhood, and an account of those to whom she gave the preference as intimates. They endeavoured to say the best of her ladyship, but it was totally out of their power to record one benevolent act done, or intended, during near fifteen years, the space of time in which the estate had been in her possession. Therefore the subject was very opportunely broken into by the entrance of supper; after which the doctor soon took his leave and retired. Miss Moore accompanied Helen to a chamber which had been appropriated for her use, and then retired to her own.

CHAP. III.

THOSE in the vicinity of Holmby Lodge, had not been silent spectators of the revolution that had happened there, and each had drawn their own conclusions as to the consequences that might follow.

The family of Mr. Allright, a banker in the city, was that which lived nearest to the Lodge. The young ladies of this family had caught a glimpse of the Heiress as she passed in the carriage with Mrs. Hall, though they were just set out with an intention to go quite a different road. This unexpected rencontre, had determined them to turn their horses heads, and direct their course back again, in order to call
on

on Mrs. Lavington, a widow lady, who was generally the retailer of the news of the village, and who had entertained them, the day before, with an account of Miss Bellingham, whom she had never seen; yet she had assured Miss Louisa and Miss Marian Allright, that she was remarkably plain in her person, and was not more than eight years of age. This had quieted these ladies' fears as to a rival, and they returned home in perfect security, for that night, of still retaining the attentions of all the *petit maitres* within the circle of their country visits.

But how had these fond dreams vanished on beholding a face illumined with both beauty and sensibility, and when they found that Miss Bellingham was, to appearance, nearly of an age with themselves! This had occasioned the laugh that was seen by Helen

as the carriage passed: "Eight years'old," exclaimed Louisa Allright! "Why she is quite a beauty," echoed Marian! "Do let us go and teize Mrs. Lavington," said Sophia, "and ask her some more questions, without telling her we have met the child she described." "I don't think we shall visit her," said Louisa. "I dare say she is a pert boarding-school miss. Papa won't be the first to encourage her unless others lead the way: we shall see what Mrs. Lavington and Lady Ander-ton intend to do." The carriage was ordered to turn round, and proceed to Mrs. Lavington's as quickly as possible: and, though at any other time, the road thither would have been thought dangerous, they determined to brave every thing rather than not tell the news, and laugh at Mrs. Lavington, for assuring them that Helen was an
ugly

ugly child, instead of a charming young woman in the full bud of youth and beauty.

As the carriage drew up to the door, the ladies observed the widow, sitting at a harp, and a young man at the side of her chair. "Very well, Mr. Charles! Don't you see who is there, Louisa," said Sophia. This exclamation drew the attention of Miss All-right, when she observed Charles Ware-ing, an humble servant of her own, *tete à tete* with Mrs. Lavington. She entered the house, with this addition to a disposition none of the most accommodating, as she had met already with a severe disappointment. The widow and her visitor rose from the music, at the entrance of the party. Every one of the ladies exclaimed, "How could you deceive us so, Mrs. Lavington, about the girl who is come to the Hall! Why she is as old as Sophia. She is

older than me, I am sure," said Miss Sophia. "I dare say you would all like her the better," replied Charles Wareing, "were she as old as your grandmother." Miss Louisa gave an indignant toss of her head at this witticism of her lover's, and replied, "Perhaps you, Sir, may be attached yourself to old women (giving a very significant glance towards the widow, whose back was now turned, and who was in earnest conversation about Miss Bellingham, with her sister,) but you should not always judge of others by yourself." "What is the matter, Louisa?" said Marian, "if Charles is impertinent, I will manage him. Mrs. Lavington won't tune her harp again for him this month, and he sha'n't see the beauty." "Is there a beauty in the country, out of the present company? Where is she? Do tell me, for I shall be in despair till I behold her. Perhaps your brother
may

may have got the start of me, and first impressions are every thing," said Charles. Mrs. Lavington replied, "that when nature prevailed, this was considered of some consequence; -but that now every thing was artificial, and impressions lasted no longer than till the next new face presented itself." "Well," returned he, "you ought not to say so, who declared that you had a husband, who never thought any woman tolerable but yourself." "I suppose," said Louisa, "Mrs. Lavington lived in the country, as the London men, I am sure, are never so constant in their admiration, even if Mrs. Lavington had been an angel instead of a woman." Indeed," said the widow, "but I lived in London in the midst of the *beau monde*." Well then, it was very extraordinary, they all thought, though politeness would not allow of any farther doubts on the subject: and

as Miss Bellingham engrossed all their present thoughts, they proceeded to enquire if Mrs. Lavington intended to present herself as a visitor at the Hall? "When it was thought proper and decorous," she said, "she certainly should; as it was all one to her who the girl was, so she possessed a good fortune, and would render the country a little gay. As to Lady Eleanor, she detested her, she was so proud and so distant." "The Allrights did not know what they should do yet, as it would not be right to encourage every upstart, and it was not quite certain upon what footing this girl was; at present they dared to say that papa would wish to know a little more about her, before he gave her any encouragement."—Charles Wareing said, that "if it was left to him and Frank Allright, she should not want for encouragement, provided she was both rich and handsome.

some. But where does she come from? Did she drop from the clouds? For I never saw any thing in the shape of a woman about Lady Eleanor, except that starch demure, Miss Moore, who always put one in mind of a frosty morning." Miss Louisa then condescended to give the necessary information. "She came from a boarding-school, where the charity of Lady Levet had placed her, though she never saw her."—"How good! all the ladies exclaimed, with a sneer. "I wonder she did not extend her charity to this village, for I am sure," said Mrs. Lavington, "there are a great many poor children here, that presented themselves every Sunday to her notice, and yet she never relieved any of them. But they say she was acquainted with the mother of this girl." "Aye, aye, this accounts for it," said Charles, "but she might have taken a peep at the poor girl,

D 4

girl: though, however, it perhaps is as well she did not, as you say her *protégé* is handsome." "You satirical wretch," replied the widow, giving him a pat on the shoulder, "I dare say you are anxious to get a peep at her yourself; especially as she will have a fine fortune, but she will not look at you."

The Allrights were in the fidgets to be gone, to carry the news to papa. Louisa was angry with her lover, Charles, and determined to throw him off for ever, as he was always flirting with some one or other, and she wished to be possessed of such a husband as Mrs. Lavington had described her's to have been; but Miss Allright did not know that Mr. Lavington was a martyr to the gout, that he seldom left his own house, and that when he did, he was carried to and from his carriage, for five out of the seven years they had been married. This little circumstance

Mrs.

Mrs. Lavington did not think proper to mention. But Mr. Allright gave his daughters this information, when they were relating what a constant husband the widow had been blessed with.—“She may boast of his constancy,” said the old banker, “it is what will never happen to her again. Poor Lavington, I believe, would not have had it in his power to return the compliment, had he survived his wife.” “How ill-natured, papa,” said Sophia, “I am sure Mrs. Lavington is a very prudent woman.” “I don’t know that,” said Louisa, “or she would not give Charles Wareing so much encouragement to visit her. I am glad, however, that that girl is come to the Hall, only to vex her.” “What girl?” asked their father, “is Lady Levet’s heir arrived?”—“Yes, we saw her this evening. Shall we visit her?” asked all the ladies in one breath, “Why,” replied the citizen,

D 5

zen,

zen, "I don't know, there are reasons for and against it." "Oh, do let us go!" said Sophia, "I dare say that they will be very gay, now the old woman is gone." "Why," said the citizen, "she will have a large fortune, and, perhaps, if we were acquainted, our house might be the better for it. She must keep her cash somewhere. Frank would also have an opportunity of getting into her good graces, and who knows but he might get the heiress to fall in love with him? She is not like the old woman, who was always boasting of her family and such like. I don't hear any word of Miss's family. So much the better." It was determined that it would be prudent to offer a visit to the Hall, for the girls were a little apprehensive, as Lady Eleanor had never shewn them the least approach towards civility, since they had resided in her neighbourhood, (as she thought it improper to encourage

courage such upstarts, whose money gave them their only claim to notice,) that Miss Moore might instil into the young lady the same notions that Lady Eleanor possessed, and that their visit might not be returned. However, the next morning, a servant was sent with a card of condolence on the death of her ladyship, and also of congratulation on the arrival of Miss Bellingham, to whom the ladies designed to pay their respects, as soon as she saw company. They waited very impatiently the return of the servant. At length he brought a gracious answer, that the ladies were well, and would be glad to receive Mr. Allright's family, any day after the next Sunday. A letter was instantly dispatched to Frank to hasten home, as he had gone a few miles off, to visit a fellow collegian. He had intimation also, that a great beauty and a great fortune was in the neighbourhood;

“ and if he was ambitious,” Louisa wrote, “ to be possessed of these, he would return without delay.”

Frank Allright was one of those characters who are easily roused, when novelty is in view. He was possessed of a tolerably handsome face and person, which, to do him justice, he studied with the nicest care, and never neglected any thing that he thought necessary towards its improvement. He had dealt alternately with all the fashionable taylor, at the west end of the town, and had studiously avoided giving them any reason to forget that they had had the honour of serving him. However, the credit of his father's house supported his extravagance, and no one doubted the responsibility of the young dasher, as he was called, as he was generally mindful to reward the servants of the respective tradesmen with whom he dealt, who were on those occasions

equally

equally indifferant whether their master's bill were ever or never discharged. Still the young 'squire was a fine fellow, and was never disappointed of a suit of clothes to his time, though my Lord Duke might storm at his Taylor's negligence. The old Banker could not think how Frank managed ; for he kept up the same appearance as the Beaux at the other end of the town, and yet his allowance was very moderate. He had hinted this more than once to his son, in order to find out if he was in debt. He had repeatedly told him, at his first setting out in life, that going in debt he looked upon as the first step towards dishonesty, where the means to answer did not correspond with the debts incurred ; and therefore he thought proper to inform him, that he had appropriated such an allowance for him, beyond which, on no account, he would go ; so that he must limit his expences within

within the above-mentioned sum. — Frank was at that time some hundreds in debt, and laughed in his sleeve, at his father's contracted notions of the expenditure of a young man of fashion. He knew that his father had risen in life by strict economy, and that he once kept a small retail shop, in the vicinity of Smithfield, but that in the course of many year's strict attention, and some few lucky strokes, as the men of business call the driving an advantageous bargain, he got into a banking-house, and did not rest till he had his name first in the firm ; and as the other partners had dropped off, he was now the principal, with a fortune of immense extent, and still possessed all the old habits of business and economy, by which he had risen. He liked the city better than any other place, and St. Mary Axe had charms which he found no where else. — But he had three daughters,

daughters, who did not see those charms in the city he himself did. They had remonstrated in vain on the necessity of living at the west end of the town ; that it was impossible to visit their friends, and live so far off them ; no one would take the trouble to drag themselves so far over the pavement, to return a morning call.

The old Banker was inexorable. He said it was a pretty ride, and that they might come by Islington, through the New Road : for stir a step nearer dissipation, he would not, say whatever they pleased.

Frank had also tried his rhetoric on this head, to no effect. So the scheme was given up, and a house in the country was to be the medium, where the ladies might stay the summer months, with now and then an excursion to Margate or Brighton, as the old man could be brought into good humour.

To

To this Mr. Allright gave a ready assent, as it would keep the young ones out of extravagance and bad company, particularly Frank, who, when in town, did not keep those hours that his father did at his time of life ; though he very seldom knew when his son came home, as he had a favourite servant, who sat up for him, and to whom he was not a niggard, but paid him liberally.

The family had resided at Carleton about two years, at the time of Lady Eleanor Levet's death. She had determined not to give them her countenance, in hopes that this would disgust them at the place, and that they would remove, when she might get some family of distinction, such as had resided on the estate before Mr. Allright purchased it. However, her ladyship had not succeeded in her scheme of routing the citizens ; for, as they were rich, they soon contrived to be of consequence

quence at the assembly, in the nearest town to them, a place Lady Eleanor never condescended to attend:

All the young men of the country paid their court to the ladies, and Frank flirted and danced with every pretty girl by turns. However, he was delighted beyond expression, to hear of a beauty and rich too, being in the neighbourhood of Carleton, and hastened to announce to his friends, that he must depart the next morning, as his father had given him a summons. He reached home the following day to dinner, and was greatly disappointed to find no other than the family party, expecting to see this rich and beautiful fair one a visitor to his sisters. However, on matters being explained, he was satisfied to wait till the next week, and in the interim dispatched a few new orders to his tradesmen in town that he might appear at the Hall in the perfect mode of
the

the day, though had it been in that of the last year, Helen Bellingham would not have known the difference. The family, after dinner, amused themselves with some scandalous anecdotes, not much to the credit of their deceased neighbour, and then determined on a visit to Mrs. Jackson, at the Parsonage, in order to hear all she knew about the young stranger. They found only Mrs. Jackson at home, as the Doctor had gone to be present at the opening of the will of her ladyship.

CHAP. IV.

WITH the first dawn of the day, Helen awakened from sweet and refreshing slumbers, and anxiously awaited the hour when, she believed, she was to be made acquainted with herself. She was unconscious of every thing that concerned her, except that she existed merely as the child of Lady Levet's bounty. But how that bounty should be extended so largely toward one, who in her lifetime she never condescended to see, or indeed honour with any degree of notice beyond an annual inquiry at her governess's, as to the progress she made in her education, and

and a remittance for whatever sums had been expended for her use? This still occupied her thoughts, and she hoped that her mind, upon this head, would soon be at rest. She could by no means give into the certain belief that the fortune, said to be within her grasp, was ever really to be possessed by her. She longed for the hour when she should again meet Miss Moore, as she must be acquainted with every thing; and as she, perhaps, would be more communicative when alone with her at breakfast. She was greatly disappointed when the clock heavily tolled the hour of seven; as it was two hours before the breakfast hour, and she knew not how to pass the intermediate time: so eager was she to be relieved from her own thoughts, and to exchange certainty for uncertainty.

The family were up, and the different servants were passing to and fro
across

across the yard, all busily employed in their several avocations. "If it is true they tell me," she said to herself, "what a strange situation I am in? Here am I mistress of a large house and a large fortune, yet dare not so much as open this chamber door, and descend amongst my servants, but must wait until I am summoned to my breakfast. Only two days are passed, and I was the most dependant of nearly forty girls, and subject to innumerable indignities. Oh, fortune," said she, "deign to unravel thy mysteries, for I am almost lost in the infinity of my surmises and doubts! I would employ the intermediate time in addressing a letter to my friend Caroline Archer, but what can I say? she will expect to hear much, and I know nothing. I will wait till to-morrow, when all doubt may, nay, will be removed. I shall be certain what are my
expec-

expectations, and who I am." She looked out of the window, and though no bright sun shed its rays to invite her abroad, the morning was clear, and she determined to descend and walk in the shrubbery which surrounded her chamber window, till Miss Moore was stirring. She had hardly reached the hall, when the Steward, whom she had never before seen, presented himself with many bows, wishing her a good morning, and that she might enjoy many years of happiness, beneath the roof where he had had the honour of serving Lady Eleanor and her father before her, and where he should account himself honoured in serving herself, with the same fidelity he had done her predecessors.

Helen knew not what reply to make. She did not yet know what right she had to be so addressed, yet some answer was due to so much civility and proffered kindness. She curtsied, and
thanked

thanked the steward for his attachment to the family, to whom she was so much indebted, and said, if it came within her power to shew her obligation for this, she hoped that he would not find her ungrateful. In the mean time, she would thank him to shew her the door which opened to the garden. She eagerly ran over the pleasure-ground, and as she was accustomed to view rural objects, though the scene had lost the luxuriance of summer, and also the mellow tints of autumn, yet there was still a sufficient prospect of beauty in decay, to promise a delightful scene with the return of spring. Helen's own breast was in the hey-day of that enchanting season ; every prospect charmed, and she exclaimed involuntarily, " if all this be really mine, I will be most happy myself, and all shall be happy around me ; no one shall be miserable. Have I not, when at school, often

often witnessed the aged bending under a weight of misfortunes, and wished I had the means of those who passed them unnoticed in their coaches. How ungrateful should I be to pass the indigent." Whilst she was admiring every thing around her, she heard a bell ring, and supposing it might be for breakfast, she hastened towards the house. Here she met Miss Moore, who advanced to meet her as she entered the hall, and taking her hand, they walked together into the breakfast room. Dr. Jackson was just entered before them, with Lady Eleanor's lawyer. Therefore all Helen's expectations of communications from Miss Moore, were at an end. Mr. Rackrent, the attorney, was a little dapper man, hardly five feet high. To do him justice, none of his height was lost, for he was continually stretching his little slender neck to its very utmost extent. He was at the time of Miss Bel-

Bellingham's entrance, standing before a very large pier glass, which rendered his little figure still more diminutive. He turned quickly round on hearing the doctor's salutation to the ladies. He began to caper about, and throw his head into so many different directions, that Helen could hardly keep her countenance. At length he approached her, and making a profound bow, said, to Miss Moore, "This is, I suppose, *The young lady.*" Miss Moore bowed assent, and he began to congratulate her on her arrival at Holmby. During his speech, he almost stared the poor girl out of countenance. Dr. Jackson relieved her by saying, "come, Miss Moore, let us take a little breakfast, and then, if you please, Mr. Rackrent, we will proceed to business." "Aye, to be sure, Doctor," replied the little man of the law, "to business, to be sure; I

settle business wherever I go: no doing without me. Weddings or burials, I must be called in. Well, who knows, I may see this house on the former, as I do now on the latter occasion, e'er long;" looking at Helen and simpering. Miss Moore looked displeased at his levity. The Doctor did not reply; and nothing passed material during the remainder of their breakfast. As soon as the Steward informed them that all were assembled who were ordered to be present, Miss Moore, with Helen, led the way to the great drawing room, both of them in much agitation. When they were seated, Mr. Rackrent placed himself in the midst of the circle, which was composed of the ladies, the Doctor, and the domestics of Lady Levet's family, who stood behind their chairs. At length, the seals were burst, and Helen turned as pale as if her future
fate

fate had been on the point of being revealed. And indeed so she expected it would be.

After the usual preliminaries had been gone through, which are usual on those occasions, and all the ceremonials, Mr. Rackrent came to the words, "I give and devise all my estates lying in this, and the neighbouring parish, together with my plate, jewels, furniture, &c. to Miss Helen Bellingham, provided she does not marry before she attain the age of twenty-one; at which period, she will open a paper directed to her, and which will be found in my jewel-cabinet, and which I require Miss Bellingham to deposit, until the above-mentioned period, in the hands of Dr. Jackson; whom I also request to accept of the guardianship of the above young lady, conjointly with Miss Moore, whom I earnestly exhort to remain with Miss Bellingham, unless

it shall be found impracticable. I lay Miss Bellingham under no restraint, whenever she shall be of age to marry, except what will be found in the above-mentioned paper; and that I desire she shall signify to Dr. Jackson, one month before the event takes place, the name and connections of the gentleman, when I authorize him to sanction her choice with his approbation, and then to put her in possession of all the ready money of which I may be found possessed at my decease, to which she will find herself fully entitled. I recommend to her all my faithful domestics, who were in the family during my father's life time, and who shall chuse to remain in her service. I also give and bequeath to Miss Elizabeth Moore, the sum of two hundred pounds, to be paid yearly out of my estates to her during her natural life; and I likewise request Dr. Jackson will accept
one

one thousand pounds, as some small recompence for the trouble I have given him in the management of Miss Bellingham's affairs."

This, with legacies to her servants, and mourning-rings to a few friends, was the contents of her ladyship's will. The entailed estate, which was of little consideration in comparison of the possessions of Lady Eleanor, with the family title, devolved on the Earl of Clifden, a second cousin, who had expected, at her decease, to have come into possession of all the property together; no one standing, as he believed, in a nearer relationship to the family. He had, in his own mind, disposed of all the ready money, which was believed to be very considerable. Indeed, he had gone farther; for he had given bonds, payable at the death of her ladyship. Not that any intimation had been given him, of any particular partiality having

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been entertained for him by Lady Eleanor. But, he said, "he knew the old girl would not forget the relationship, as she always entertained a proper respect for family antiquity; and she must know that he would do the honours of the family most excellently well, when furnished by her with the means."

All ceremonies being observed respecting the will, the meeting broke up: when Miss Bellingham, Miss Moore, and Dr. Jackson, with the little Lawyer, adjourned to another room. As soon as they were seated, Miss Moore said, "now, my dear, we may congratulate you on your accession to a very splendid fortune." "Yes, indeed, Miss," replied Rackrent, "you have got the ready; indeed, you have cut out the young Earl, that's not fair, upon my word." Miss Moore coloured, and said, "Sir, Lady Levet's property was at her own disposal, and, consequently,

quently, she might have given it to you, if she had so pleased." The Lawyer bowed at the reproof, remarked, that he had a vast deal of business to do before dark ; and after assuring Miss Bellingham, and Dr. Jackson, that he should always be superlatively happy to receive their smallest commands, took his leave, to the no small joy of all the party.

Dr. Jackson then approached and took the hand of Helen, saying, " my dear young lady, I can see in your expressive and intelligent countenance, that you are not satisfied. You wish for farther information ; but as this is not, at present, to be obtained, and as there is nothing like a link of a chain to lead us to any farther knowledge, you must compose your mind to enjoy the good already bestowed upon you by an all-wise and beneficent Providence. An ample fortune is laid at your feet ;

E 4.

then,

then, my dear, only think how you are to dispose of it, so as to evince your gratitude to him who has protected you to this time of your life, and who will still extend his protection if you are found deserving."

Helen could not answer the good Doctor, but she kissed his hand, which held one of her's, whilst the tears fell fast upon it. Miss Moore seeing Helen so agitated, advised her to retire to her own room, till her spirits should regain a little more composure. To this she gladly assented, and curtsyng, went to her apartment; where, after shedding a flood of tears, at the recollection of her disappointment, and how long she must wait before the mystery of her birth should be explained, she by degrees regained her usual serenity of temper. Just at this moment the bells of the village church struck up a joyous peal, and as they were reckoned to
be

be a very musical set, Helen was quite delighted to hear them, never once thinking that it was in honour of herself they were ringing. Her mind still ran from one subject to another, defying all order, when a young woman entered her room, saying, "the Steward begs to know what your ladyship would order for the ringers." "Me order?" said Helen, "I have nothing to do with it." "Why, they be a ringing for your ladyship, sure enough," said the girl, "because you be comed to be our lady, and if you would but let me try to be your maid, I should be as merry as any of them." "Would you, indeed," said Helen, "well then, you shall be the first person I make happy, for you shall be my maid, if you like it." The girl, whom we shall for the future call Sarah Mason, thought no more of any thing but her own good fortune, and making an awkward curtsy, ran down stairs, highly elated at her good luck,

crying, to every one she met, " I be miss's maid, indeed I be."

At the foot of the stairs she was met by the Steward, who had sent her up to know how he was to reward the ringers. She had forgot what madam said ; so he went to the dressing-room door himself, and after his knocking, the door was opened by Helen herself. He repeated again the question of " what she would chuse that he should give to the ringers?" Helen blushed at the recollection, that, of the current coin of this kingdom, she was not in possession of more than two or three shillings, which she had been a long time accumulating: for if Lady Eleanor had ordered her any allowance of pocket money, Mrs. Linworth *had taken care of it for her*. She said, " why, indeed, Sir, I have nothing to offer them that will be worth their acceptance ; but if you would have the
good-

goodness to ask Miss Moore, perhaps she can tell what will be best to be done." "Why, my good lady, should you ask any one? what is your pleasure is sufficient for me. I will pay them, if you will order the sum." "Will you, indeed?" said Helen, "Why then give them five guineas, and tell them I am much obliged to them; but would rather they would not ring any more now. It does not look well that I should rejoice at the death of my benefactress, or encourage her neighbours to do so."

The old man bowed, and went down stairs. He went directly to the house-keeper's room, where sat Mrs. Hall, not in the best of humours, as she had only mourning and a year's wages left her, whilst the old servants had, some annuities, and others sufficient to place them comfortably in the world. "Well, Mr. Allen," said she, "has Miss given

you half-a-crown for the ringers?" "Half-a-crown!" answered he, "no, five guineas, and here it is, pulling them out of his pocket. She is a sweet pretty creature, and I really, God forgive me, did think she looked like my deceased lady when she spoke." "Did she!" said Mrs. Hall, "I am sure she did not act like her then. When would the poor of this parish have gotten as much out of her?" "Come, come," said the Steward, "there are worse than she was, still living, I believe. Our young lady, perhaps, will make the poor amends." "Aye, aye, Mr. Allen, after a miser generally comes a spend-thrift. I have heard it remarked, 'lightly come lightly go'." At the conclusion of this speech, entered Sarah Mason, dressed in her new mourning with a white apron on. "Hey day, Mrs. Sall," said the lady house-keeper, "pray how come you dizend
out

out so? You are not to put on your new clothes till Sunday; what do you mean by going on in this way? The house is turned topsyturvy, I think."

"Why!" replied the girl, "I am Miss's maid; she told me so herself, and I could not wait on her in the dirty dress I had on this morning." "She told you so; and who bid you go near her? You have a fine deal of assurance. You her maid! no, indeed, I have sent for my own niece, and she will be here this night or to-morrow morning, and she is fit for a lady's maid. You would not know how to dress a lady, and Miss don't know much about it herself; surely when I had all the trouble of going to fetch her to be a lady, she may let me get her a maid; so pray no more of this stuff, but go to the laundry again about your business, or I shall send for your mother to take
you

you home. You a lady's woman forsooth !”

The old Steward saw which way *she* inclined, and, as quarreling was not his *forte*, he walked away to execute an office more pleasing to him, and more congenial to his disposition. This was to reward the ringers, for the truly hearty peal they had rung in the honour of Helen. “Here, here, my good fellows, young madam has sent you five guineas ; but you must ring no more, she don't like your jingling.” The spokesman scratched his head, and said “it was the first time they had ever been found fault with, when they had set heart and hand fairly to it ; and I'm sure we did so this morning, because as how we heard young madam was likely to do some good amongst us.” “Well, well, my good fellows, I won't discourage you so much : Miss only wished

wished not to rejoice so soon after my old lady's death. She is much obliged to you, she bid me tell you so. And I promise you, whenever she is married, if I am alive to see it, you shall have your fill of ringing, and also of strong beer likewise, and as an earnest of what I promise, you shall drink Miss Bellingham's health on the spot. Mr. Allen called for a large can of ale, when they all drank to the health of the young Heiress, and after giving three cheers, left the house in high spirits, now that their skill in ringing had not been called in question. However, they determined to give her one peal, just by way of gratitude, and then to desist.

CHAP. V.

MISS Moore had retired to her own chamber as well as Helen; her spirits being much agitated by the opening of the will of her deceased friend: not that any part of its contents surprized her, for she was acquainted with the manner in which her ladyship's property was disposed of, before her death. Miss Moore saw the task imposed on her, by Lady Levet, to be an arduous one, though, since she had become a little acquainted with Helen, her mind was somewhat more at rest. She perceived a tractable pliability in her manner, that promised to give less trouble to those.

those who were to advise and direct her, than she had at first expected. She was happy in having such a coadjutor as Dr. Jackson, who would take upon him the management of those concerns of which she was hardly competent to judge. This she really thought, though she was a woman of a highly cultivated understanding, and there were few occurrences in life, on which her judgment could not have been passed without censure.

Miss Moore now began to consider of the last conversation she had with Lady Eleanor Levet, on the subject of Miss Bellingham's conduct for the future; for though her ladyship had laid no absolute constraint on her conduct, she hoped that Miss Moore, being older and more able to direct, would gain such an ascendancy over the mind of her young friend, as would, when she was informed it had also been
her

her wish, induce her to yield to whatever was proposed in any plan Dr. Jackson and she should agree upon. It was too soon yet to enter upon any thing like business, and she determined, for the present, to do all she could to amuse, and form the mind of Helen to what she hoped one day to see her: which was, though not a perfect model of propriety, yet as near perfection in mind, as she appeared to be approaching to this in her person.

Helen Bellingham was, at the time of her arrival at Holmby Lodge, just turned of sixteen; with a person formed in nature's finest mould. She promised to be rather above the middle stature. Her complexion was fair, with nut brown hair and blue eyes. Her teeth were small and regular, and might vie with the finest pearls for whiteness. Added to these, there was an animation and innocence that played about

about her intelligent features, such as directly spoke to the heart, and created an interest for her, independently of the adventitious advantages of fortune.

Such was Helen Bellingham when she was called from obscurity, to act her part in the dignified and exalted rank, in which she was now placed, by the will of Lady Eleanor Levet. Youth, and an excellent flow of spirits, easily reconciled her to accept the proffered good, and wait the time that Providence might, or, indeed, that Lady Levet's will had allotted, for an explanation of *her own history*.

She was sitting revolving in her mind what she should occupy her time in, whether in taking a walk again in the garden, or if she should set down and write to Caroline Archer, when Miss Moore tapped at her chamber door, and asked her if she did not wish
to

to see the house of which she was now the undoubted possessor: if so, she would walk over it with her, as decorum did not allow of their going abroad till they had been to church the next Sunday. Miss Moore said she had desired Dr. and Mrs. Jackson to join their party at dinner. Helen thanked her in the best manner she could, and said she should be much gratified in seeing the house, “for indeed, madam,” said she, “it will be the first elegant one I have ever seen. I have been used to see only the outsides of fine buildings.”

Miss Moore now carried her young friend to the drawing-room, which was in the finest stile of architecture, and also furnished in a most costly and splendid manner, not entirely in the modern style, but yet not so much out of the fashion as to be called antique. Helen’s mind was divided betwixt the
furniture

furniture and the fine collection of elegant pictures that decorated the walls ; but her attention was riveted most in the anti-room, where the family pictures were placed. She viewed, over and over again, those of her late benefactress and her sister, which had been drawn when these ladies were of a similar age with herself. Gratitude too, no doubt, had a share in her mind.

She asked Miss Moore, “ if the picture of Lady Eleanor at all resembled her when she first knew her ? ” To which she replied “ no ; if I had not been told to whom the portrait belonged, I could not have traced the resemblance. So you see, my dear, how soon the features change. It is the mind that retains its identity, not the face, however lovely. Lady Laura’s portrait is the most beautiful, in my opinion, and I have heard that she was a truly amiable woman. She died in
the

the prime of life, regretted by all who knew her."

Helen now waited silently for her praise of Lady Eleanor her benefactress; Miss Moore, however, did not, at that time say any more, but passed on to the other apartments.—When she came to that which had been occupied by her ladyship herself, Helen viewed every thing with much curiosity. Her eye involuntarily fixed on the identical jewel cabinet, in which was contained her own history, as she had been informed by her ladyship's will. "That, my love, contains jewels that now belong to you, and a secret which also will one day be yours." Helen burst into tears when she thought how long she must wait in suspense ere her story was revealed. She said, "Oh madam! can you tell me if my parents are living? I think I could wait patiently to know the rest, if I was but resolved in this
one

one question." Miss Moore assured her she did not know, as Lady Levet had never been communicative to her at all, on any subject that concerned the family or connections of her whom she did not even know she intended to make her heir till her last illness. Then she only gave directions what she would have done, and gave advice which she hoped Miss Bellingham would endeavour to follow as nearly as she could. It might, Miss Moore said, be easily done, as it was quite general, and not at all binding on her if she was not disposed to adopt it. "But," she added, "my dear, we will not enter on these serious subjects at present; I wish to amuse, not to distress you. This evening, if you please, we will open the casket, and deposit the papers in the hands of Dr. Jackson, and then we will endeavour to forget all about it, till the period

period when all doubt will resolve itself into certainty."

They left the chamber and passed through all the other parts of the house worthy of any particular notice. They amused themselves until it was time to dress for dinner, with consulting about and giving orders for proper mourning. For Miss Moore thought proper that Miss Bellingham's own orders should be issued, in order to create that proper respect she wished to see paid to her by the domestics of her late friend; and which she feared they might not so readily pay, did they not see her act as their mistress, which she really now indisputably was.

The estate which descended, with the title, to the earl, as next male heir, was very small. It was scarcely two thousand pounds a year. But the possessions of Lady Levet were immense. As
her

her father, the late Earl of Clifden, had, in his younger days, lived, what is termed, too fast. In short, he had dissipated a large estate in all the follies and frivolities of the age in which he lived. By the time he ought to have been in the enjoyment of domestic happiness, in the bosom of an affectionate wife, and two beautiful children, he found himself involved in inextricable difficulties. He had never been able to assume courage sufficient to look his affairs in the face, till all efforts to retrieve them were ineffectual. At length he found something must be done: what that something should be, was now the question. The Earl had not forgotten that his creditors must be settled with; but in what manner, he was unequal to the task of determining. His steward presented him with involved accounts, from which, being naturally an indolent man, he turned with

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disgust. However, luckily for his lordship, he had one friend, to whom he applied, and to whom he laid open his affairs. After a minute investigation, it was found, that on all debts being liquidated, there would not remain two thousand pounds per annum, to support a family, who had heretofore, revelled in all the splendor and extravagances of the times. This friend very luckily hit upon an expedient that set all to rights in a very few years, and which gave a more ample fortune to Lord Clifden than that which he had thoughtlessly dissipated. He happened to be related to the minister of the day, and, as he had always voted with him, and had two or three boroughs that did the same ; his friend advised him to wait on his relation and lay his present situation before him : he might suggest some plan.

His lordship, who did not like to
relate

relate his embarrassments, sent his wife with a letter to pave the way for his presenting himself at the next morning's levee: from which he returned the nominated governor of one of our richest East India settlements.

It was determined that Lady Clifden should remain at home to superintend the education of her daughters.—Everything was soon arranged, and the Earl set forward to amass a splendid fortune, which he did with credit to himself, and also to those who had placed him in so elevated a station.

On his lordship's return, after a residence of many years in India, he found Lady Clifden on the verge of the grave, into which, she in a very few months descended, leaving him two accomplished daughters. His lordship had lost nothing of the pride of family, which he had taken out with him to India, but rather gained an accumulation to the

stock. He determined that his daughters should marry into the first families, or not at all: they were to be ennobled, by a matrimonial connection, not degraded. His lordship's wishes were not seconded by any offer from the families into which he desired to transplant his daughters. They, however, were not without suitors innumerable. Lady Laura in particular, had many offers and it was said she herself would not have put a negative on all her suitors, had not her father taken care to dismiss them as soon as their attentions grew particular. Lady Eleanor inherited all the family pride of her father; whilst her sister had imbibed all the amiable qualities, and feminine softness of her mother.

The two ladies were on a return from a visit, when Lady Laura was taken ill at an inn and died. She was rather the favourite with the Earl, and
he

he did not long survive her ; leaving, to Lady Eleanor all his estates, that did not descend, with the title, to the young Earl of Clifden, between whose family, and that of the late Earl, there had never been any intercourse. Lady Eleanor inherited also the immense sums of ready money accumulated during her father's long residence in the East, to which she had rather made an addition than at all diminished them.

The Carleton estate, which was considered to be worth between three and four thousand per annum, more than supplied all her expenditure, as she always resided in the country eight months in the year : and, indeed, it could not be said that her change of residence at all added to her expences ; for her ladyship went to the metropolis, more because it was visited at a particular season of the year by persons of a particular rank, than to enjoy any amusement or society

peculiar to the spot. She received little company ; those only were admitted who had the honour to claim kindred with the Clifden family, and could support this claim with their own splendid situations ; for it was whispered, that many claimants to her ladyship's regard, had been rejected on the score of not bringing any patent of nobility to substantiate the claim to consanguinity. In short, Lady Eleanor Levet inherited all the pride of her ancestors, without retaining any of their virtues. No one could record any generous or benevolent action done by her. *Self* was the idol she worshipped, and to whom she wished every one else to pay homage. Alas, she did not once think, that those who exact attention from others, should shew some themselves.

Helen, on regaining her own chamber, sat down immediately to write to her friend Caroline an account of all she
had

had just seen, which was quite *novel* to her ideas.

Helen Bellingham, to Caroline Archer.

“ MY ever dear Caroline will not believe that I have forgotten her, because I have not written as soon as I arrived at this delightful place. That never can happen ; you were my first, and will continue my dearest friend, if I had a thousand.

“ I dare say, you was very dull when I went away, and so was I too, for all the fine coach. I wish you had been by my side instead of that inquisitive old woman : I should then have been able to pour out some of the sentiment with which my mind was crouded, by the sudden reverse of fortune I had met with. I can hardly yet believe it true, and fancy that Mrs. Linworth, or Miss

Porter, will come and tell me I have been in a mistake, and must go back to school and dependance again. But this is all folly in me, for, I have this morning been witness to the opening of the will of Lady Eleanor Levet. She has left me so much, that I can't tell you the half of my fortune. I know by the Housekeeper, who brought me hither, that the Carleton Estate is near four thousand a year, and that this is left to me, besides money and jewels, and, in short, more than I deserve or know what to do with.

“ I have been just walking all over the house with Miss Moore ; my house Caroline !—Now, don't say I am proud, I only want to make you laugh at the thoughts of Helen Bellingham having any house of her own, except such as we used to amuse ourselves with building with the pack of cards you brought for our private diversion.

“ What

“What do you think is the first pleasure I promise to myself from all this great good fortune? Why, that you will spend the next holidays here with me. Your good mother must not deny me this. I shall make a journey to her on purpose, and then call at Harrowby, and drag you away from *the old forms*, to sit on damask and silk chairs. Oh! such charming paintings, Caroline, you will be quite delighted.

“But I have not said a word about the lady who is, with Dr. Jackson, appointed my guardian; I mean Miss Moore, who lived with Lady Levet as her friend and companion. I was prepared, by Mrs. Hall, the housekeeper, to be greatly on my guard before her, and expected that she would be very cross and ill natured: instead of which, she is quite the contrary. Her countenance has nothing forbidding in it, such as I have often seen, but rather

something good and amiable: I think I shall like her very much. Greatly, indeed, shall I need somebody to direct me what I had best do. I used to think, when at school, that I had learnt every thing, and now I do believe I shall find that I know nothing.—But indeed, Caroline, I will not go to school again——do you know they rang the bells here this morning for *me*?—The face of the world seems to be changed. A week ago and nobody looked at Helen, and now I seem the object of attention to everybody. I hope I shall deserve all this good fortune. You must excuse my letter, for I am so confused I don't know what I write; I have so much to say to you. I wish you was but here: we could then ramble about, and settle future plans, as we have often done in the play ground at school. Don't you remember when you said that if every you
had

had a house of your own, I should live with you, and that you would never have a new gown or bonnet without I had one likewise. I have not forgotten it.—Talking of clothes, I do believe you would be quite surprized to see Lady Levet's wardrobe ; and you shall see it, for it will remain just as it is until you come hither, I dare say. I never saw such a quantity of finery ; what could she do with it ? It is impossible that half of the dresses could be for her own wear, and they are too fine for the poor people, or I should think she bought them to distribute amongst her neighbours. There are some young ladies, who live near, as I find, for we met a coach full of them as we came hither. They looked like alderman Wilson's daughters at our church, both proud and conceited ; but I find they are rich : and if riches make people proud and good for nothing,

mine will be of little use to me. But I hope I never shall forget that I have no title to pride, except that which my own conduct may create, and that I shall ever continue to deserve the friendship of my dear Caroline.

“ Pray remember me to our governess and Miss Porter, and to all the ladies: tell them I will not forget them when the fruit season returns. And now, my friend, I must conclude, for Dr. Jackson and his lady are to dine here. I cannot, until I am one and twenty, be informed of my own history, or whether my parents are still living; which is a great damp to my present happiness. However, four or five years soon pass, and then I shall be at a certainty.—Surely my parents could not have offended Lady Levet, or she would never have been so liberal to me, for whom, however, she could not have entertained any regard, or she
would

would have condescended, sometime or other, to have seen me. Well! I will think no more about it at this time. What a long letter I have written! Adieu, my dear Caroline, I depend on our meeting in about three weeks.

Your affectionate

HELEN BELLINGHAM."

Helen sealed up her letter to her friend, and then sat about dressing, as well as she could, to receive Mrs. Jackson, whom she had never yet seen. At the dinner hour, the Doctor introduced his lady to Helen, with whom she seemed highly pleased. The small party spent a rational and agreeable day together, talking over the family concerns, and instructing Helen in many particulars, of which it was proper she should be informed. They
were

were all mutually pleased with each other, as an universal stream of benevolent thoughts ran through the whole party, and their young pupil promised to imbibe the good instructions offered to her; and to profit by such excellent examples as were exhibited by her friends.

In the evening, the casket was brought down, in order to lodge the papers, that contained the history of Helen, in the hands of Dr. Jackson. The packet was sealed with the arms of the Clifden family. Helen trembled when Miss Moore put it into her hands, in order that she should deposit it with the Doctor, according to the tenor of the will.

She cast a trembling look at the packet as she turned it in her hand, and, with a deep sigh, consigned it, as directed, to the care of the good Dr. Jackson, until the term should be expired, when she might be permitted
to

to know, from whence she sprung, and if she was related to any human being now in existence.

The Doctor took the eventful deposit, saying, that he hoped one day it would be a source of much satisfaction to them all, as it would elucidate a mystery, that appeared evident (from the concealment thought necessary by her who occasioned it) was not for the good of Miss Bellingham proper to be then explained. Had it been otherwise, she who had so amply provided for Miss Bellingham, would not have withheld a communication so necessary to her happiness, could this also have been then accomplished. With these and many other reasons, he endeavoured to fortify her young mind with patience to wait the allotted time, nor murmur at Fate which had, otherwise, made for her such ample provision.

The evening was passed in proposing
plans,

plans, and in settling many family concerns that were left by the rather sudden death of Lady Levet in disorder; though in general the utmost precision was adhered to in all her concerns. These were regulated by Miss Moore under the immediate inspection of Lady Levet: so that all business was readily settled. The Rector and his lady took their leave early, and the ladies soon after retired to rest.

CHAP. VI.

THE long expected day arrived when the young Heiress was to make her first public appearance at the church, and never had this edifice been more crouded. The day was as discouraging as any that the month of November had ever presented : it was both foggy and rainy, yet no one remained at home on this account, not even the widow Lavington, who hardly ever presented herself at church during the winter months, being afraid of catching cold. But curiosity got the better of the damps and dews. She wrapped herself up in a warm pelisse and was
in

in her pew, even before the Allright family. The good citizens were all of them there also. Even Frank said he would for once endure a sermon, as it was to see a pretty girl.

At length Helen and Miss Moore arrived. They had to pass through a gaping croud, assembled in the churchyard, who were eager to doff their hats to young madam before she encountered the fashionable stare of her more polite neighbours. She passed through them unconscious that the compliment was paid to herself; believing that it was to Miss Moore the homage was offered, as having made a part of Lady Level's family. Poor Miss Moore might have gone to church and returned without the least notice, as she and Lady Eleanor had done for many years, except they happened to come in the way of any of the villagers, who received actual employment at the
Lodge;

Lodge; and they generally slunk out of the way when they saw the coach approach the church gate.

After service was ended, and they had heard an excellent sermon preached by the Doctor, he came down from the pulpit and joined his lady, who was paying her respects to Helen: at which instant Mrs. Lavington took the opportunity of walking, or rather tottering, up to Miss Moore, hoping that she was a little recovered from the shock her spirits must have received from the loss of her respected and amiable friend Lady Levet. Mrs. Lavington then said, she should present herself at the Lodge the next morning, and, curtsying to Helen very particularly, passed on, saying to Mrs. Jackson, "excuse me, my dear madam, I did not see you before. I have been quite enchanted by that beautiful creature. She is loveliness itself. You know I expect you to tea."

tea." She then, with the assistance of her footman and a female servant, contrived to reach her carriage. The All-right family contented themselves with bows and curtsies to the ladies; and were in haste to reach the family coach to give their opinion of Helen.

The door being shut, they could scarcely allow time to order the coachman to drive to Mrs. Lavington's, before they all spoke at once. "Well, what do you think of her?" They all declared that she was tolerable, but "that she had no ease in her appearance," Miss Marian said. "She looked conceited." Louisa remarked, "She did not know how to dress herself," Sophia said, "or she would never have had such an ugly hat on: she was sure that it was an old one of Lady Levet's, and that she had seen her wear it on occasion of some family mourning."

The old citizen had hitherto held his tongue;

tongue, from which he was not prevented, whilst he allowed his daughters the free exercise of theirs. But now he said, "he was happy to find Miss Bellingham was so prudent a girl as to save the expence of a new hat, when she might have laid out, he dared to say, as much as half a guinea and not have looked a whit the better. Why, she would look like an angel in any thing," said he, "so she is in the right to save her money."

"Like an angel, papa, did you say?" asked Louisa; "yes I did say so, and so will Frank, I dare say too," replied Mr. Allright, "when we get home."

"What strange ideas men have of angels," returned Louisa, "the girl is well enough: but because she has got a little money, which neither you, papa, nor Frank either, will
ever

ever be the better for, she must be deified. I see nothing to admire so much in a school girl. You would have passed her without notice if she had not had a fortune, I believe."

Though this last assertion was the direct truth, it did not sit the more agreeably for this reason: and the old man, being determined to vex the girls a little more, let down the glass of the coach, and pulling the check string, waited until they were overtaken by Frank, whom he accosted, "Well, did you stay to hand the Heiress to her carriage?"

"That did I, father," said he, "I would not have left the church without being introduced, for the world. The Doctor was so good as to perform the ceremony of introduction."

"Well, well," replied his father, "I hope it may not be the last ceremony
that

that he may be called upon to perform between the parties," with a significant nod of his head.

"I'm over head and ears in love already," said Frank to his sister Louisa.

"And I fancy you have a rival already: for papa is in love too with your angel." The ladies all set up a laugh. And the coach was allowed to proceed to Mrs. Lavington's, where Frank attended them.

Sophia alighted first, and running into the house, exclaimed, "make room for two despairing swains, who are already dying for love of the beauty."

"What then did you meet Charles," asked the widow?

"No, we did not," said Louisa: "was you afraid that he had been unfaithful?"

"Lord, sister," said Marian, "it was impossible that Charles Waring could have

have been in love with Mrs. Lavington and Miss Bellingham at the same time : it would have been like courting mother and daughter."

Mrs. Lavington was not much obliged to Marian for this remark, as she always contrived to put on all the infantine airs of youth, and if any occurrence was referred to what had happened ten or fifteen years before, she affected to know nothing about it; though it was as many years since she had first entered into the bands of holy wedlock.

The old citizen had been offended by his daughters, and was determined that the vexation should not rest with him alone. He well knew how to catch the widow in his trap. He asked her if she did not remember the marriage of his friend Tommy Anderson; as his wife was very like what Miss Bellingham was then?

At

At this instant, Frank Allright entered, leaning on the arm of Charles Waring, and the Widow was in hopes to get rid of the question. It was not to be passed over, for the old Citizen repeated it, and she replied, "Lord no, Sir! I remember nothing about Tommy Anderson's marriage: I was at school, I dare say, when it happened."

"Was you, indeed?" replied he, "Why I never heard that Lavington sent you to school after your marriage. But it might have happened whilst I was at Lisbon. However, it was cursed cruel in him though, if he loved you as much as you say. If any man was to marry a daughter of mine, and send her to school afterwards, I should call him to account I believe."

All this time Mrs. Lavington sat in great agitation, for she well knew, to deny what Mr. Allright said, would

bring on an explanation she did not wish ; yet she did not well know how to assent to her having been sent to school after her marriage. She therefore attempted to laugh it off.

The young ladies (particularly Miss Louisa, as her admirer Charles Waring was present) wished to humble their friend, and they knew their father's manner of bantering too well, not to understand his meaning.

“ If I was you, Mrs. Lavington, I would be very angry at papa for saying that I went to school after I was married, for I dare say you did not, did you ? ” asked Sophia.

“ Why,” answered the old Citizen, “ I am sure that Mrs. Lavington has been married longer than my friend Anderson, for she was with her husband at the christening of their first boy. Don't you remember, widow, that you and Lavington quarrelled about
some

some nonsense or other, and you would not eat any dinner ?”

“No,” she replied, “she knew nothing about it.”

“Well, well,” rejoined Mr. Allright, “it is a little excusable, for I believe it is nearly thirty years ago, and I had forgot that the memory of a fine lady never extends farther than the occurrences at the last summer’s dipping excursion.”

Here Charles Waring interposed, saying, he had been greatly disappointed in not coming time enough to escort the ladies to church, and must be allowed now to make his apology.

It was the first time in his life he had ever thought an apology necessary for abstaining from his duty, Mr. Allright returned, and he was glad to find he was at last determined to amend. He feared still, that religion had very little share in his thoughts when he mounted his

horse for Carleton. However, it was best not to be too inquisitive into the motives, as he might bring another old house over his head. Looking at his watch, he reminded the ladies that it was time to depart. They very reluctantly bade Mrs. Lavington a good morning, at least Louisa did; she being obliged to leave her lover behind, as both he and Frank intimated a design of sitting a little longer at the Grange.

After putting the ladies and their father in the baggage waggon, as Frank termed it, they returned with Mrs. Lavington into the house, and she gave Charles Waring a description of Helen, not quite so full of loveliness and elegance as she had signified to Mrs. Jackson, she thought her young friend. However, Frank made up in exaggerated praise, what she kept back on the score of envy.

Charles Waring found that Mrs.
Laving-

Lavington intended a visit to the Lodge the next morning, and he desired the honour of attending her, as she might introduce him as a relation.

This caused a good laugh, as it took some time to trace the consanguinity. At length it was made out, though not very clearly, that Mrs. Lavington's mother and Charles's father were second cousins.

At length the two friends mounted their horses, in order to take a longer ride and converse more freely; Charles assuring Mrs. Lavington that he should be with her by breakfast the next morning, that she might not escape him by going early to the Lodge.

The Allrights arrived at home not in the best humour for a family party: so on alighting from the carriage, each took a separate direction; the Citizen to a room which he had dignified by

the name of study, but which would have borne any other as well: for it was the place to which he resorted when out of humour, or when he chose to regale himself with his old companion a pipe of tobacco, or when any person of inferior rank came on business, and who was not fit to be introduced to the ladies. For though the walls were surrounded with books, he had never been seen to exercise the least curiosity to know more of them than their outsides told him. The ladies never took them down because they were such a hum drum collection, that they served only to put them in the vapours: Spectators, Guardians, and Tatlers, and Histories of—— they did not know whom; wrote they did not know when.—Voyages of a parcel of old musty tars, who had talked of more than ever they really saw. There were a few tolerable Novels amongst them,

but

but then they were old fashioned, and the authors preached so much, and the heroes and heroines were so stiff and formal, that the ladies could not read them; and those that were not of this character were, on the other hand, boisterous and vulgar. So in short the library remained to collect the dust, not to entertain or enlighten any of the family. However, this room had its uses assigned to it, though that of study did not belong to it. Here was placed the chest that contained the family plate, and in this were lodged the different parchments and securities that were not intended for general inspection, and also what money was necessary for the common expenditure of the family. It might have borne the name of counting-house very well. It was alledged, that when the ladies were from home, their father sometimes gave audience to the maid-servants in

this room, if they were at all pretty, under pretence of settling their accounts.

Here, then, the old gentleman retired in order to consider what advantage he could make of the connection with Miss Bellingham; if he should put himself to any expence to entertain her. She had a great deal of ready money, which he knew more about than she herself did; but then it was not likely that she would be advised to take it out of the hands it had been placed in by Lady Levet: besides she had guardians, and they would not advise this. At length the Banker caught hold of a link of a chain which might, if well and properly rivetted, unite all the different interests in one.

“That will do! I’m sure it will!” exclaimed he, rising from his elbow chair in which he had been musing over possibilities and probabilities.

This

This was no other than that of his at once addressing Miss Moore and marrying her. This made him one of the guardians of Helen, and brought the cash into his house, and it would bring the Heiress herself ultimately to his house too; for he had no idea of either himself or his son's being rejected, if ever they prevailed on themselves to prefer their suit.

Miss Moore had, besides, a small fortune of her own, to which had been added by Lady Levet's will two hundred per annum, and his girls would be the better of a steady woman to manage them.

It was a most lucky thought. He saw the Heiress, the Lodge, and all her other possessions in his own family. He was so delighted, that by musing over the advantages gained by this connexion, and the effects of a warm fire, he fell asleep, and was dreaming of

a peerage to Frank, when dinner was announced.

There were none but the Allright family present : the ladies were not in the most happy temper, as they had not had so truly agreeable reveries as their father. They were surprized to find him in such a happy flow of spirits as he appeared in.

After the cloth was removed, he said, " Well, I suppose we shall have tolerably agreeable neighbours, now the old woman has left us : for I think Miss Moore is said to be an agreeable amiable woman, and you girls, and Frank also, will find Miss good company.

Frank assured his father that he never wished for better company than Miss Bellingham.

" Well ! well ! may be so, we shall see," returned the old man with a significant nod at his son. " Why," said he, " would it not be proper, after we
pay

pay them a visit, to invite them hither to dinner?"

"Yes, papa," answered the eldest Miss, "after they have returned our visit. How do you know if they will ever come here?" This she said only to vex the old man, for she was certain that their visit would be returned from the gracious answer to their compliments of condolence.

"Yes, yes," replied he, "they will come, I believe. Suppose you was to invite them to a bit of a ball?"

This intimation opened every eye and every mouth at once.

"Did you say a ball, papa?" asked all the girls in a breath.

"I only said a *bit* of a ball, that is, a sort of a dance, only, you know; if I say hop, or jig, or dance, why it is vulgar."

This, at any other time, would have created some unpleasant altercation, as

the ladies had much trouble to keep their father within the pale of polite conversation ; but the intimation of the possibility of their giving a ball, had such an effect, that it restrained every reply, but such as was dictated by good humour.

“ Well, Sir, call it ball, jig, or dance, which ever you will, if you only permit us to give it.—When shall it be?—Which shall we make the ball room?—Whom shall we invite?—

“ Invite !” replied Frank, “ why every body to-be-sure.”

“ No ! No ! not every body,” said their father, “ our house would not hold them.”

“ La, papa,” said Sophia, “ why every body invites every body, when they have a ball. Don’t they sister ?”

“ To be sure they do,” returned Marian.—“ Well, it will be delightful.—How much we are obliged to you,
my

my dear sir.—I know you will let us do things a little in style, if we do it with economy ; and Louisa and I, with Mrs. White's assistance, who has a brother a confectioner in London, and who would come down if she writes to him, we should accomplish every thing.

Frank said, “As he was going to London, he would engage a band of music, such as had never been seen at their assembly, if his father approved.”

To their utmost astonishment, the old Citizen said, “It should be just as they liked, provided they did not go too far ; and that this might not be the case, he would make them an allowance, and they must then do their best to entertain their company.”

Frank now found his father in so excellent a humour, from what cause he could

could not divine, that he followed him into his study, where he retired to take his accustomed pipe; a condescension he seldom indulged his father, being afraid the fumes of the herb he was smoking, might attach to his clothes; but he had a request to prefer, that required his taking the old one in the precise state of spirits he was now in. This was no other than an advance of the next half year's allowance.

He sat down on entering, saying, "I am going to town, Sir on Tuesday; if you want any thing I will order it, or do any commission you may have."

"To town! Why what can you want there? it is hardly a month since you left it."

"Why," replied Frank, "when I left town, I did not follow your example, Sir; I did not discharge all my debts. I came now to request you to advance

advance me the next half-year, and then I shall keep my credit, which I am very anxious about."

"If you had been anxious about this, Sir, you would not have run in debt; nor is it likely that your credit will be ever established, if you run on every year thus, by expending it six months before you come into possession? I should never have had it in my power to have supported my credit if I had begun as you are doing. Pray what is to become of the bills you intend, I don't doubt, to contract, during the ensuing six months? I suppose when these become due, you will want a year's advance. This shall not be. This may do for a young spendthrift, whose family never knew the getting of their fortune, but not for my son.—Why, Sir, at your age, I was standing behind a retail counter, with two suits of clothes, one for Sunday and one for every

every day. You must, I dare say, have half a dozen."

Here Frank laughed in his sleeve, at the contracted notion of his father; for instead of half a dozen, he would have been nearer the mark if he had said, a dozen and a half.

The old Citizen took his pen, and began to calculate. This was no good foreboding. After he had amused himself for some time, whilst his son sat picking his teeth, waiting for an end being put to this *tête à tête*, by a negative to his request, the old man took out his pocket book, from which he issued a couple of checks. This raised the spirits of Frank, when looking over his shoulder, he saw fifty pounds, in plain letters. As soon as he had written it, he said, "Well, Sir, on condition that I have never cause to be displeased with you in this way again, and in consequence of a promise I am
under

under to indulge your sisters with a sum of money, for a nonsensical ball, I shall give you fifty pounds, because I do not like these anticipations."

Frank thanking his father, and, pocketing the draft, was about to depart, when his father gave him another draft for one hundred, which he was to carry to Louisa, as the sum he allowed her for the promised fête. With these two sums Frank hastened up stairs, to surprise his sisters. He entered the room with a draft in each hand. "Ladies, which would you chuse? Shall I sing, or say the contents of these divine compositions. Neither Milton nor Pope evere wrote so much to the purpose," said Frank.

They all three rose to look at the contents of the two papers. However, Frank pocketed them both, saying, "Now tell me, how much do you expect my father's liberality will allow

low for your promised entertainment. They could not tell, but if it was what they had reason to expect, from his ideas of ladies' expences in general, he might give the ball himself; for they would do nothing shabby. "Will fifty pounds content you?" asked he.

"Why if we can get no more it must do, but we will calculate first."

"Oh! for heaven's sake, no more calculation!" replied he; "I'll be generous for once, and double the sum, rather than you should get into bad habits; one financier in a family is sufficient. I have been amused this way for the last quarter of an hour in the study."

"Well," answered Marian, "how could you be better employed. I would consent to sit by my father for the remainder of the day, if his calculations would be as productive every fifteen minutes. So give us the dear draft, and

and we will soon convert it into a thousand pretty uses."

Here he produced the two drafts, to the utter astonishment of all present.

"What could have operated on the nerves of the Alderman, to stimulate him to two acts of generosity at once?"

They approached, to take a nearer survey of the hand-writing, fearing that Frank had been amusing himself at their expence. — But papa's hand-writing was too well known to leave any doubt. Every one declared that twenty pounds was the sum they expected; though they might afterwards, by representation, have got it enlarged.

A general consultation ensued, at which Frank assisted, when all the arrangements for the fête were made. It was proposed that the ball should be a masked one, if papa had no objection. Sophia was dispatched to the study to
purpose

propose it, and see how it would go down.

As soon as Sophia had told her father that a masquerade was proposed, with his approbation, he instantly put a negative on it, saying, "No, no! all fair and above board. I'll have no bush fighting. I was never ashamed to shew my face, therefore a ball, and no deception, that's the thing."

Sophia replied "that to be sure it would be just as her father pleased, only they were thinking Miss Bellingham might have been at a ball, but it was certain she had never seen a masquerade." "She was too pretty to hide her face under a mask," he said: "it might do very well; when she was twenty or thirty years older." So no masquerade, Sophia found, would be allowed, and she returned to the consultation in the drawing-room, with her

her answer. She came when all the arrangements were amicably coming to a conclusion. Every thing was settled, only what device should adorn the tickets, and on what day the important entertainment should be given.— It was at length agreed on, that that day fortnight would just bring them into the Christmas week, and so then it should take place.

Mr. Alright, when he came up to tea, was informed of all the arrangements, as far as they durst inform him ; but some little extravagances were kept back, for fear of his censure. He was in a perfect good humour, and approved of every thing. And then, to the utter astonishment of all, he asked their advice on a subject that they had never suspected him to be at all anxious about. This was, which of his present suits of clothes became him best ; as he would wish to appear on the
next

next day at the Lodge, in that to which his daughters gave a preference. He also gave orders for the family coach to undergo a thorough brushing, together with the harness, &c. that they might make as good an appearance as possible, in this their first visit to the Lodge. For none of the Allrights had ever yet entered the park gate, though they had often passed it in vexation, not at the loss of Lady Levet's society, but because their neighbours saw that there was not consequence enough attached to them, to attract her notice.

Now then was the happy day arrived, when all distinctions of rank were to be buried in good neighbourhood and friendship, betwixt the inhabitants of the Lodge and those of the Grove House: the name by which Mr. Allright's mansion had long been distinguished.

It was determined that two o'clock
should

should be the precise hour that they ought to make their appearance. The coach was at the door at the moment ordered: when the Citizen, his three daughters, and Frank on horse-back, sat forward for their visit.

CHAP. VII.

THE Allright family were received with all possible politeness by Miss Moore, who introduced Miss Bellingham to the several branches of it.—The young ladies all seemed to be highly delighted with Helen, and assured her that they should consider the friendship of herself and that of Miss Moore as a considerable acquisition. Mr. Allright was not deficient in his attentions to Miss Moore, whom he complimented in the most direct and pointed manner ; while his son made all possible advances to the young lady, who

who was herself better pleased with this family than she at first thought possible : for Miss Allright, fearing lest Helen might have observed them laughing, when they met her on her way to Carleton, told her that they were quite diverted when they first beheld her, as they had been informed that she was a mere child. “ You may judge,” said she, “ how agreeably we were disappointed in finding you so much nearer our own age.”

Certainly Helen was not very distant from the age of Sophia ; but Miss Allright, who was then speaking to her, was at least five and twenty. However this little circumstance of dates of birth, is the last that a female entrusts to her most intimate friends ; and as Miss Allright dressed nearly up to the age of her youngest sister, she did not consider that any doubt might be entertained that nearly ten years had elapsed

between the period of each of their entrances into the world.

The visit was prolonged to the very latest limits that it could be protracted, and then they took their leave ; all of them in the most perfect harmony of spirits.

Helen was herself pleased with her new friends. Indeed she was disposed to be pleased with every person and every thing. Novelty rendered the attentions she received from every one quite charming. These troops of new friends furnished her sensible and well-informed friend, Miss Moore, with many reflections on the worship that is paid to the idol gold, in whatever shape it may present itself ; and though she acknowledged that the beauty and innocence of Helen well deserved attention, yet she could not help bringing to mind how many years she had lived without one friend, except her school companion,

companion, Miss Archer, and how many more she would have probably continued in the same state, had not Lady Levet placed her in the elevated situation of her heir. She had also her fears that this adulation, as it was uncommon, might operate on her youthful mind, so as perhaps to inspire vanity and eradicate the many useful lessons with which she had been presented in her former state of dependence. This she determined, it should be her care, if possible, to guard against, by the best advice in her power to offer to one for whom already she felt more than a common interest.

Miss Moore had not much time for reflection; for, from the earliest time in the morning that visitors could present themselves to the present, there had been a rapid succession of company at the Lodge.

Mrs. Lavington, and her relation Charles Waring, had been the first in the morning. For this she apologized, saying "that she was determined to be the first to offer her congratulations, hoping thereby to secure herself the first place in the friendship of the ladies." She had acted over all the infantine airs of a grown baby, and then retired to give place to a succession of other visitors, all eager to claim the title of first friend.

In short, the week was passed in receiving, and the next in returning visits, at the end of which Helen was astonished, when she looked over the list of those to whose acquaintance she was now entitled, by all the rules of visiting etiquette. However, Caroline Archer still maintained the same place in her affection, and she looked forward to the end of the week, with much eager expectation, as at that time she was promised

mised the company of one in whose bosom she had been accustomed to pour forth the effusions of her heart, whether excited by joy or sorrow.

The family at the Grove House were quite satisfied with their reception at the Lodge. The old gentleman congratulated himself on the apparent success in this his first attempt for many years to render himself engaging in the eyes of a female of any degree of elegance. He thought he perceived that his flatteries were rather grateful than otherwise to Miss Moore. In short, he did not doubt but the same dose, often repeated, together with his known opulence, would ultimately gain his object ; nor did he forget to take into the account the impression that might be made by his own personal appearance ; though to say the truth, this would not have occurred to any one else.

Age is one of the most sturdy and incurable diseases. It is a vain effort to try to resist or avert it. While we are building on life, and think that the roses of youth will never fade, the head is gradually silvered o'er with the grey touches of time; before we imagine that day is gone, the shades of the evening imperceptibly mingle with the rays of the departing sun; till at last the field, the forest, the hill, and vale, vanish in the bosom of dark obscurity. Such is the kind illusion with which Nature shades and softens the approach of dissolution.

Nor had the old Citizen been an unattentive observer of the progress his son was making in this his first visit to Miss Bellingham. He thought that Frank did not set himself forward so much as he himself would have done at his age, in a similar situation. This it must be owned was a fault seldom to be

be alledged against his son; but he found, in the company of Miss Moore, nothing encouraging to that flippancy and small talk that makes so considerable a part of the conversation of a modern fine gentleman, as the *petit maitres* of the present day term themselves, though others do not always sanction the appellation. It is often observable that the same persons who, in light and volatile company, make a most distinguished figure, when in the company of intelligent and rational beings shrink back, impressed with their own insignificance. This was just the case with Frank Allright; he had sense enough to perceive that Miss Moore would not think the better of him for presuming or playing over the many little fooleries that rendered him acceptable in other societies; and therefore determined to obtain her regard by a respectful and attentive manner,

rather than that which his father had been used to see him assume, when in the company of their city friends. It certainly was not Miss Moore's own personal regard that he was emulous of acquiring; but he considered that to stand well in this lady's opinion, was a strong recommendation to do so where he was most anxious to gain acceptance and favour; for, independent of any interested motives, he greatly admired the beauty and native innocence of Miss Bellingham.

The ladies could find no fault, as Helen was quite unassuming, and shewed every disposition to be pleased with them; a very essential recommendation in most societies, but particularly in that of females. Miss Moore's easy and elegant manners, would not bear the criticism of Miss Allright, in any ill-natured way; so she did not chuse to hazard any remark, at all, except
that

that she appeared a good sort of woman, though rather too precise.

Here Mr. Allright corrected her, and said, "Surely that could not be deemed a fault in any one; it was a chief requisite in business; and a family would not be managed a whit the worse, if she who presided over it had a good portion of precision and punctuality in her character." The ladies did not give much approbation to this remark, as by doing so they would have been accessory to a censure on themselves.—It certainly was owing entirely to the good management of the master, that their family concerns were free from derangement. In the regulation of their own private affairs, the ladies exhibited the utmost confusion and disorder.

Dr. Jackson, whom, with Miss Moore, Lady Eleanor Levet had made conjoint guardians of Miss Bellingham, was a truly worthy character, and a

blessing to the parish over which he had presided for nearly twenty years : a period antecedent to that of the residence of the Earl of Clifden. During the life time of this Nobleman, he occasionally visited at the Lodge ; but the Earl possessed too much of aristocratic pride to accord with the sentiments of the good Clergyman, and he too well knew the folly of an attempt to remove rooted prejudices, or to enter into any controversy with one who had for many years been used to reside where his will constituted a law.

Though the Earl was seldom seen at the church or at the Parsonage ; his two daughters frequented both, and often honoured Mrs. Jackson with a visit, particularly Lady Laura ; she frequently dropped a tear at the relation of distress, and made the Doctor her almoner to relieve it as far as lay in her power ; always restricting him to silence.

Lady Eleanor did not possess a mind
animated

animated with the same benevolent sentiments; and Lady Laura feared that her conduct, if known, might seem like a censure on her sister. However, the Doctor never administered her bounty without giving the object of it to understand the channel from which it flowed; with this caution, that no notice was to be taken of the benefits received, other than in addressing that gratitude disclaimed by the earthly donor, to Him who is the giver of all good. Indeed, had not their kind benefactress been known in her life time, at her death the secret, would have been disclosed. For though the many applications for relief that were preferred to Mrs. Jackson, were answered by all the assistance within her limited power, yet it fell short of what had been before usual. The Doctor made some efforts in order to induce Lady Eleanor to follow the truly amiable example of

her sister, by disclosing, after her decease, the many acts of charity done by her sister. This had no other effect than to be heard in silence, and passed over with inattention. They were opposite characters, and it was not possible they could ever act upon the same principles; therefore the Doctor contented himself, as far as possible, with doing his own duty himself, and giving examples as well as precepts to others. He always lived upon the best footing at the Lodge, though never admitted to that degree of intimacy which might have been naturally expected. Yet Lady Eleanor respected those virtues she would not imitate, of which she gave a signal proof in appointing the Doctor guardian to her on whom she had bestowed her fortune.

The Doctor accepted the trust, with a full determination to execute it with the strictest fidelity. He was greatly pleased

pleased to observe in Miss Bellingham an appearance of both sense and sensibility much above her years, and thought that these, well directed, might tend both to the happiness of herself, and also to the benefit of those to whom fortune had been less kind. He was particularly happy in the assistance of a female so well calculated, as Miss Moore, to assist in forming the mind and manners of Helen. His own wife would also lend her assistance, by the uniform tenour of a virtuous and religious conduct, to accomplish what he wished to see his Ward, a deserving and an amiable character. He, however, determined to observe minutely her different propensities, and not too hastily form a judgement on the whole. To direct her mind to proper pursuits, but not as many do, by opposition, to strengthen bad habits. As a very near connection betwixt the Rectory and
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the Lodge had now taken place, he would have much opportunity of observation.

Helen herself in spirits, elated with the smiling prospects before her, thought of nothing but pleasure and universal benevolence. The world she considered as a gay and luxuriant garden, where every vista was terminated by a pleasant object. Her mind was as unclouded as her heart was innocent, and she was disposed to enter on the great theatre of life with the most favourable impressions.

She had written a letter to the mother of her beloved Caroline, to request her company during the school vacation. This invitation was too flattering to the vanity of Mrs. Archer to be refused, and she directly returned her consent, with acknowledgments for the honour done her daughter by Miss Bellingham.

Caroline

Caroline was instantly fetched by her mother from Mrs. Linworth's, in order to make the necessary preparations for so important a visit. For, though Mrs. Archer was a woman of some fortune, yet her circle was removed many degrees below that to which Helen was now elevated.

Caroline herself was overjoyed so soon to enjoy the society of her friend. Her spirits, naturally volatile, were now wound up to the highest pitch, at the prospect of coming within the reach of those pleasures she had often read of, and sighed that she could never enjoy. Her mother had always a great store of novels in her house; these Caroline seized and read, indiscriminately, and with avidity, whenever she returned home for her holidays. Nor were the good principles inculcated by Mrs. Linworth, able to eradicate the impressions of romance imbibed during

so short a stay at home. Caroline Archer possessed great sensibility of disposition, and was of that nature that required to be constantly under restrictions. Her heart was like a looking-glass, which presently receives the image of what is represented before it, and as soon loses it. The strongest impression she had, was that of affection for Miss Bellingham, and her whole mind was absorbed in the thoughts of the pleasure she was to enjoy in her society. Her mother counted upon her daughter's attainment of a fortune equal to that of her friend; as Caroline possessed a person and face extremely elegant and beautiful, and which, in her mind, were only to be seen to be adored.

At the promised period, Helen, accompanied by Miss Moore, set off to escort her friend to the Lodge. It was really the first time she had herself
been

been sensible of all the splendour around her; now that Caroline was to be a sharer in her happiness.

Mrs. Archer had made the best preparation for their reception, and also for her daughter's appearance at the Lodge, in her power, and saw them depart with secret exultation in the future prospects of Caroline.

Miss Moore endeavoured to lead the conversation toward what might be agreeable to the young ladies; but they longed for the time when they should meet unrestrained, and free to communicate their sentiments to each other.

After a pleasant and short journey, for Mrs. Archer did not reside more than twelve miles from Carleton, they arrived at the Lodge just as the shades of evening were closing on the scene, which was at that season both cold and gloomy. On alighting, an elegant mansion,

mansion, and all the attendant comforts, presented themselves to Caroline. Miss Moore, soon after tea, excused herself to the young friends, saying she had some letters to write, and that she would return to supper: well knowing that she was evidently a restraint on them.

The intermediate time was most happily passed in talking of past deprivations and of future pleasures, which were to be spent in the loved society of each other. Caroline looked with delight on the splendid situation of Helen, and sighed to think that, perhaps, when she became more acquainted with the world she might be forgotten by her, and that that visit might, perhaps, terminate their acquaintance.

Helen observed her somewhat thoughtful, and asked to be made acquainted with the cause. Caroline did not like to acknowledge the direct truth, and

and only replied, that she was thinking that, perhaps, when Helen was grown up and married, they might never again meet.

Miss Bellingham assured her, in the most affectionate terms, that as she had been her first friend, she would ever look on her in that light as long as she should live; and that if ever she neglected her, she hoped to be put in mind of this conversation.

The evening was spent with great satisfaction to all parties. The young ladies wished for the return of the morning, as then they intended to take a ramble over the leafless garden, and to explore beauties in embryo.

The morning arose and turned out a clear and fine one. As soon as the breakfast was removed, Helen proposed to accompany her friend in a walk through the garden to the village, and Miss Moore proposed joining them.

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at the Lodge-gate, and taking a walk to the Rectory.

They proceeded to Dr. Jackson's, where they were received with kindness and hospitality : nor were they allowed to return till the evening. During the space before dinner, the Doctor took an opportunity to walk out with the young ladies, whilst his wife and Miss Moore amused themselves in conversing together at home on late occurrences. He led them through the village, and into many decent cottages. In order to induce Helen to repeat the visit, he enquired into their different situations, and into the destination of their children.

In one of the cottages, Helen was surprized to see Sarah Mason, who made her one of her finest curtsies. She enquired how long she had been at home ? and was answered, " Ever since the day that I was discharged from the Lodge."

Lodge." "Discharged!" replied Helen, "why did not you leave the house at your own request? I was told that you went to attend your sister who was sick some miles off."

"No, indeed, my lady," said the girl, "I was too proud when I was per-fared to wait on your ladyship, to have gone away if I could have helped it; but Mrs. Hall said that you had changed your mind, and that I must be gone directly, as you had heard something to my disadvantage; and so I comed home to mother, who has done nothing but fret to think how I could have disoblged you, and Madam Moore, so as to be turned out at a minute's warning."

"But to-morrow morning John Holmes is to go and fetch Mrs. Hall's Niece to wait on your honour," said the old mother.

Dr. Jackson enquired of Helen how
the

the matter stood, which she related in the same artless manner as it happened. The Doctor soon saw through Mrs. Hall's politics in preferring her own relation to poor Sarah Mason. He advised that Sarah should be sent that evening to the Lodge, with a message, that Miss Bellingham had chosen her to wait upon herself. This was determined on, and Sarah was again the happiest girl in the village.

Helen and Dr. Jackson left the cottage loaded with the blessings of the poor old widow Mason, and the modest curtsies of her daughter. They diffused happiness wherever they went, and, indeed, where they went not; as this visit was a presage that the poor would not be neglected, by the young lady, though they had nearly been so by Lady Levet.

On their return to the Rectory, the Doctor said to Helen, will you indulge
me

me in making one other visit to an old friend of mine, who is not able to visit you, as he is confined to his house with the gout. "We don't know," said he, "but one of you may captivate him; he is a widower and very rich." They both laughed at the suggestion; but Helen readily assented to go wherever he pleased, and declared that she had never spent a pleasanter morning.

After a walk across two or three fields, they stopped at a very large old fashioned house. "This," said Dr. Jackson, "is Mr. Boyle's, and I hope that you will like him. You must not be angry at any thing he says, as he generally speaks what he thinks. He is a man universally beloved here, and indeed every where, for he always promotes the good of his fellow creatures."

He was not amongst the visitors at the Lodge in her ladyship's time. He
used

used to visit the Earl when he first came to Carleton; but some disagreement estranged the families, and they never met afterwards. However, I wish that the acquaintance may be renewed, and so does my friend, if you have no objection?"

The servant now opened the hall door, and without announcing any name, readily admitted Dr. Jackson and the ladies.

The Doctor said, "Well, Sir, I have brought two pretty young ladies to visit your, so I have ensured myself a welcome."

Mr. Boyle, who was sitting with his feet on cushions, put forth both his hands, and said, "here are my hands for the ladies, but my feet are not at my own disposal, so they must excuse my rising; but I am glad to see them and you." Here the Doctor introduced Miss Bellingham and then Miss Archer.

Mr.

Mr. Boyle congratulated the former lady on her accession to such a good fortune. "And now, young lady," said he, "it remains for you to shew yourself deserving of it. Perhaps now, you expected that I should give you credit for all the virtues under the sun, because you were the favourite of fortune. But you know that she is represented blind, and, indeed, to say the truth, oftentimes in my life I should have been at a loss to account for her caprices, had I not accounted for them in this way. However, come I am glad to see you, and if you can allow an old man to speak the truth, sometimes, I doubt not but we shall be good friends." Here he shook Helen heartily by the hand. "I suppose," said he, "you have been pestered with friends since you came hither? Did any of them ever call on you when you was at school? No! no! they knew better.

Well, take care of them, and don't let them flatter and court you 'till you are as insignificant as some of them are themselves. And I advise you to give the key of your heart to my friend Jackson to keep, together with the odd kind of a deposit the old lady has entrusted him with."

The young girls did not know how to reply to this speech. Helen curtsied and Miss Archer smiled. To relieve them, a servant entered with chocolate and cakes. Mr. Boyle enquired after the health of Miss Moore, who, he said, he was glad to find had not been forgotten by Lady Levet: and he assured Helen that she ought to think herself fortunate in the advice and friendship of such a woman.

"Perhaps you will wonder how I know any thing of her qualifications who have never been in her company more than once in my life. I judge of people

people from trifling circumstances, as much as by the great leading features in their character. She found out the way to manage a despot without being herself a sycophant."

Dr. Jackson here added his testimony to the many virtues of the lady in question; saying, that he must apologize for not making her of the present party. When they set out it was not certain that they might return that way; but doing so, he could not pass the gates without introducing Miss Bellingham to his friend.

"Well then, that we may not seem to give offence, will you present my compliments to Miss Moore, and beg that she will appoint a day to dine with me, as I cannot wait on her. Tell her I know that she is above the foolish nonsense of not coming to the house of a gouty old man, because no female presides. She has the best security in the

world for my not running away with the young ones."

They then rose to take their leave, and were again honoured by a hearty shake by the hand, and departed.

The Doctor asked what they thought of Mr. Boyle. Helen said she thought he seemed to speak very freely of every one. "He makes it a rule so to do to every one ; and if you should ever give him cause, he would tell you of a fault in a room full of company."

"Oh," said Caroline, "I hope he does not go out often then ; for I am sure he would soon find something to scold me about."

"Well, well then, take care," said the Doctor, "for he won't spare you. But, for all this, he is a most worthy and benevolent man, and does more good, as it were, by stealth, than half the county besides. I have known him attribute to others, acts that he has
done

done himself, being afraid it should be suspected they came from him.

Helen began to have a veneration for his character, the more it was displayed; and before she reached the Parsonage, she had placed him in her heart as a respected friend.

Miss Moore had been surprized at their long stay, and enquired where they had been so long, as they might have made the tour of the village twice over in the time. The Doctor said, that he had been introducing Miss Bellingham to a gentleman with whom she had left her heart; and begged the ladies to guess where they had been.

They mentioned the name of every young man within five miles of the place, thinking that they had met with some one taking an airing. Mrs. Jackson at last said, "Oh! I know, you have been to Mr. Boyle's."

Miss Moore was well pleased to find that she was in his good graces, and promised to name an early day to spend, with Doctor and Mrs. Jackson, at his house.

The ladies now amused themselves, for the remainder of the day, in admiring the neatness and good order of the house, and in walking in a beautiful little garden, which the Doctor took great pleasure in cultivating, and returned home in the evening, highly pleased with their first rural excursion to the village of Carleton.

The first thing that presented itself on their return, was cards of invitation for the three ladies to a ball and supper at Mr. Allright's on that day week. Most truly delighted was Helen, and her sprightly friend Caroline, who longed for an introduction into high life, and the idea of a dance quite enchanted her.

Miss

Miss Moore said that they must accept the invitation, as she rather supposed the entertainment was given on their account. The young ones never entertained a thought that it was possible to refuse so pleasant a summons.

No sooner were they alone, then they began to consult how they were to be dressed. Helen said, as she was in mourning, little could be done by her as to show and finery. Caroline displayed all the little finery that she had been equipped with, for this visit, by her mother; and they at length determined on a white muslin robe: but for a head dress she was quite at a loss. She seldom wore any ornament other than her hair curled according to her own taste; but now this was not sufficient. Helen said that they would go to the next town, and she would present

I 4 her.

her friend with a head dress, and procure one also for herself.

It was near morning before the ball dresses were settled to allow either of them to sleep.

CHAP. VIII.

FRANK Allright posted to London in the highest spirits imaginable, not that he had gotten fifty pounds out of his father, but that they had obtained leave to dash, as he called it. That is, to give a ball and astonish their quiet country neighbours, and that all this would create a stir and bustle, which to him was delightful. Besides, when he met his city friends, he could talk of the doings going on at their country seat; and to those he did not choose to invite, he could exaggerate the splendor of the intended entertainment.

He was charged by his sisters, with as many messages and commissions, as would have completely taken up the whole of the intermediate time, betwixt his arrival in town and his return to the country. But he had to amuse himself, as well as to provide for his elegant appearance on the important night. He had to attend all the places of public resort, in order to ascertain the exact cut of the fashionable coat of those men whom he had considered as the criterion of elegance in dress.

Frequently had he been cajoled out of a guinea, as a supposed fee, for the taylor he employed, to get a sight and pattern of the very coat he had sent home, perhaps, only the day before to the Prince, or my Lord Duke, and had considered his taylor as a very clever and excellent fellow, in being so assiduous in procuring him the first of the
fashions;

fashions ; while the fellow pocketed his money and laughed at his folly.

As soon as he had invited his company and arranged his business, he posted down again to Carleton. His chaise was full of preparations for the fête, and the next day brought down three or four persons, who were to employ the intermediate time, in adorning and altering the house, and in preparing the supper according to the rules of the galas which were exhibiting in the metropolis on a more enlarged and splendid scale. Less splendor would be sufficient to astonish at the distance of fifty miles from the grand scene of voluptuous dissipation ; and that was what the younger part of the Allright family always aimed at.

The old gentleman did not much approve of the transformation of his mansion, yet as he hoped it was to be the prelude to plans in embrio in his

wise head, he determined to submit for this once. He never dreamt that this was intended as a precedent to an annual ball, and that this would give his family a taste for elegant expence which he had so long laboured to keep down.

The poor old man had successively been chased from room to room, till, like Noah's dove, he knew not where to rest the sole of his feet. He had mounted to the second floor quietly, but did not relish the next remove, which, at that season of the year, promised but a cold and comfortless retreat. He therefore ventured to ask, if it was intended that the whole house was to undergo a metamorphosis, as he would then quietly take up his lodgings at the next farm house, until they had restored his own mansion again to order.

The

The ladies said he might rest in security where he then was, until the day of the gala, and then they all intended to sleep at the farmer's, as the few beds that were allowed to keep their stations must be appropriated to their London guests.

Mr. Allright now thought it right to remonstrate; for though he spoke of removing, he had not the smallest intention of so doing, and begged his daughters to understand, that if he had been accessory to turning their brains, he could not suffer himself to be turned out of his house; that they and their guests might accommodate themselves wherever they chose, but quit his house he would not to accomodate the mighty Paul, Emperor of all the Russias.

Against this peremptory declaration, they durst not remonstrate; though the grand plan was some what deranged by the obstinacy of the old citizen.

However,

However, it was not possible for a very trifling circumstance to ruffle the spirits of the ladies. Frank had executed all his several commissions to their highest satisfaction, except, that instead of one hundred pounds, the whole sum allotted to try their ingenuity upon, he had expended more than double that sum, that is, he had taken credit in the metropolis, and trusted to Chance, the paymaster general of all those who look not beyond the present day, and who yield to the gratification of every silly or extravagant fancy that assails their imaginations.

Miss Allright saw, in the coming gala, an opportunity of teizing her old lover Charles Waring, who had lately been rather relax in his attentions; and also to mortify the widow Lavington, to whom she in some degree ascribed his neglect.

Marian

Marian expected from London a young man on whom she had, in her great bounty, bestowed her heart, without once being sure that she had made any impression on his. In short, every one longed for the happy day of bustle and confusion: even the old Citizen hoped to derive some advantage from the display of his opulence in the eyes of Miss Moore and her young friend, and submitted with tolerable patience, thinking he might repay himself when the family at the Lodge should be inmates of his house. It must be owned that his patience was well tried, for he exclaimed, that Job had never had a modern gala to encounter, or he might not have been found so firm in his integrity.

On the evening before the grand one, coaches, curricles, and post-chaises arrived successively for the space of two hours. Mr. Allright saw no end to his
visi-

visitants. He said he was glad to see them; but what accommodations they were to have he did not know; for there were not more than three beds in his house, so they must scramble for these.

“Oh, then,” replied a mighty smart beau, “we must bundle as they do in some outlandish country.”

“I wish you had never bundled here,” muttered the master of the house, whilst he went to welcome another party just announced.

Every one was alarmed at a little squeaking female voice, crying out, “Well, to be sure, here I be! Billy wou’d bring me. I am so soused.”

“Come along, my little one! come along.—Where’s Frank? I want to shew him my companion in style.”

The gentleman passed Mr. Allright in the hall, whilst he dragged on the lady. Who she was could not be distin-

distinguished but by her voice, because one half of her dress and her face had a thick crust of mud over it. In this state Miss Albina Delany was introduced to the ladies and the company assembled.

“ Oh deary me ! deary me ! ” cried she, “ why if this is’n’t the ball night. Why I have been in every ditch betwixt Leadenhall street and this, e’ent I Billy ? ”

“ Why yes, to speak the truth, you have seen the bottom of a few of them, indeed.—The roads are so bad, and it is so cursed dark ! Why don’t you get the roads lighted as we do at London.”

Miss Delany now espied Sophia, and running up seized her round the neck, and embraced her so cordially, that she left a portion of the mud that adorned her own, on the fair cheeks of her friend, which served further to enhance the mirth and hilarity of the company.

Billy

Billy declared he would not have drove his curricule so far in quest of a dance, had there not been a fine fortin in view. Here he laughed and nodded significantly, looking towards Frank.

Billy Delany was the butt of most companies into which he was admitted. In short, he often made up all the amusements of the evening; for if, as was often the case, the conversation came to a pause, Billy always was a *dernier* resort. Frank Allright always took him with him to most parties, as an excellent foil. Besides, Billy had the command of the *ready*, and, though not very willing to allow this, Frank knew how to flatter him into a confession, which often ended in his discharging the reckoning, with a promise of reimbursement the next day, which promise was not as faithfully discharged as it was made.

Billy

Billy Delany was, by trade, a sugar-baker. His father had amassed a very splendid fortune, and then retired to live amongst the nobility; leaving his eldest hope in Leadenhall street, to support the old firm. He had also left his eldest daughter Albina to be house-keeper to her brother, and to steady him against he took a wife. However, instead of steadying, Billy had contributed to render his sister as truly ridiculous as himself.

It had not been Frank Allright's intention to have invited this delectable pair to Carleton; but one of his friends hearing of the gala, took an opportunity to talk of it in Mr. Delany's hearing; when he gave a hint that rendered his invitation quite impossible to be avoided. He said he was glad to find his friend in cash just then, for he himself was greatly in want of it. A bill to be paid and not a guinea at
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the banker's. So if you please, Frank, we will settle accounts, pulling out a pocket-book that Frank knew could bode him no good.

He said, "Why, Billy, don't you know me better than to suspect me of cash when any fun is in the wind? Though had I known you was so hard run, the country gala I came to invite you and Miss Albina to partake of, should have waited a little. Those cursed Fiddlers and Confectioners should not have had my money."

Here Billy pocketed his cash account, and laughing, owned that the banker had not quite shut up the great book, and he believed the credit would stand till the sport was over. Frank now told him of the Heiress he might have the chance of getting, and they parted, with Billy's promising to bring down with him, or to send down before him, different articles that would add
another

another twenty or thirty to the current account.

Never were two people made happier than this brother and sister by the invitation. He had hardly time to regulate his business, in such haste was he to circulate the happy tidings to the bucks he met on 'Change: and, for Miss Albina, she hurried away to her milliner's in Cornhill, to consult her as to a dress, and various little ornaments on this delightful occasion.

Thus they were occupied until the curricule received the happy pair, and set out on the road to Carleton.

Had they really been man and wife, the journey could not have commenced in a manner more apropos. They quarrelled all the first stage; said nothing the next; and the next they were over-set by a broad-wheeled waggon; the driver of which had the audacity to refuse to take the wrong side of the
road

road to accommodate Miss Albina, whose fair hands now held the reins.

Her brother now first came into humour with the accident, when he reflected that he had escaped broken bones; which he had avoided by being almost smothered in a ditch with his sister squalling beside him.

He scrambled out to look at the curicle, and left the groom to assist his sister. The vehicle had lost a wheel, but as they were at the entrance of a village, whilst they dried and changed their wet clothes, all was set to rights again.

Now Billy determined to be sole charioteer for the remainder of the journey. They then proceeded tolerably well, till they came within two or three hundred yards of Mr. Allright's house.

Frank had stepped out into the village, and hearing the squeaking voice
of

of Miss, enquiring for Squire Allright's, he sent a lad, whom he had just met, to say it was about three miles farther off on the other side of the common.—Billy smacked his whip, and off they went at full speed. But were not so successful as his brother citizen John Gilpin of famous memory, who went farther than he intended, and came home safe at last. So enraged was Mr. Delany, when he found that he had been made the sport of the country boors, that he paid on the backs of his horses, on their return, that resentment he durst not have attempted on that of any thing that had spirit to have returned it in kind. However, the poor creatures, smarting under the whip, ran, or rather flew, into a pool of water that lay across the road; and the wheel, catching a sharp angle of a little foot-bridge, thrown over for passengers when the waters overflowed, again laid them

them low ; and had it not been for the exertions of the groom and some servants who assembled on hearing of the accident, (for it happened almost close to Mr. Allright's house) the pair might not have come off so well.

As it was, it afforded amusement for the remainder of the evening. Miss Delany determined that she would never more be driven by Billy, or ever go into the country at Christmas. In the summer, if they were overset a bit, why it was only getting up, shaking off the dust, and setting off again.

The company found that they were used to such little adventures ; nay looked upon them as common to their summer excursions.

The whole party was accommodated with lodgings at the different neighbours' houses, and the servants of the visitors lodged in the stables and hay-lofts. The servants of the Allright family

mily were fain to take to the different carpets, tables, and chairs, for beds.— Frank and his sisters spent the night at Mrs. Lavington's. The old gentleman staid to do the honours of his house.

Whilst every one was so well employed at the Grove House, those of the Lodge were no less busy in preparations. They had been to the nearest milliner, made their several purchases and returned very happy ; particularly Caroline, who had been loaded with valuable presents by her friend. However, though they were perfectly tranquil and happy, they did not find all at the Lodge in the same state on their return ; for at the hall door stood a chariot, the horses of which denoted the haste with which they had proceeded thither.

The Steward informed Miss Moore, with a very significant look at her, that

the young Earl was arrived, and waited her return within the house.

Miss Moore had never seen this young man, nor could she conceive why he came thither. She instantly dispatched a messenger to Dr. Jackson, announcing her guest, and then went into the parlour, desiring Miss Bellingham and Miss Archer to go into the drawing-room. She did not chuse to present either of the ladies till she saw the motive that had induced the Earl of Clifden to make so unexpected a visit.

As soon as her name was announced, the Earl, who was looking over a newspaper, rose and said, “ I see by your countenance, madam, you had rather I had not made you a visit. I assure you it is perfectly friendly. The old girl has had her freak, and I must be satisfied. I am come to see the fortunate

fortunate young lady, and to assure her that she needs not be alarmed at me, I take things as I find them, coolly," bowing.

Miss Moore was at a loss what to reply to so strange a speech, but as she found their guest was a good humoured one, she asked him to go with her to the drawing-room, where she would introduce him to Miss Bellingham and her friend.

"Aye, aye! to be sure," replied he, "pray introduce me to my new relation. Is she a relation though? You are in the secret. The old one was very sly."

Miss Moore replied, she knew no more than that Lady Levet had, by her will, bequeathed her personal property to Miss Bellingham. To whom she was related was unknown, as much to herself as to her.

“ Well, it does not signify, introduce me to the girls, and we’ll soon be friends. She has got a snug house here. —You’ll excuse me, I always rattle thus. I mean no harm.”

They went to the drawing-room, where the young ladies were waiting, in anxious expectation, to know the motive of the Earl’s visit, as a copy of the will had been sent him as soon as it was opened.

Helen felt that she inherited her present fortune through some strange caprice of her benefactress, not from any just right, and she had not confidence to encounter the young Earl, whom she could not help considering as the rightful heir.

Miss Moore presented him as Earl of Clifden, a cousin of Lady Levet’s, who had come to visit Miss Bellingham as a friend.

“ Don’t

“Don’t you know, my dear madam,” replied he, “that a male friend is a suspicious character when a lady is in the case. So I will introduce myself. Then, ladies, here is Francis, Earl of Clifden, at your service, as poor a dog as you can pick out of the peerage, and as thoughtless as he is poor. I have only preceded my creditors a few hours, for they are determined to quarrel with this fair lady, for getting into the good graces of the old lady, and are determined to have her fortune whether she pleases or no. Now I am come to assure her, that I wish her both health and happiness, and that she may long enjoy this house, and consider me a friendly visitor.”

This speech made them all smile, and Helen, reassured by the good natured frankness with which it was delivered, said, she felt herself greatly ho-

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noured

noured by the visit of any relative of Lady Levet's.

Here Dr. Jackson was announced. He soon saw all was harmony; at which he was well pleased, and began to talk of the preparations at the Grove for the next day's gala.

Lord Clifden enquired where the fête was to be celebrated; and hearing it was at Mr. Allright's, determined, with Miss Bellingham's and Miss Moore's permission, to make one of their party, as he had some little knowledge of the old Banker, on account of a transaction that had passed betwixt himself and one of the Tribe of Levi, in which Mr. Allright was the principal.

"He is a cautious warm old fellow; what has opened his heart at this joyful season to hospitality and mirth?"

Dr. Jackson said he believed it was
to

to please his daughters, who were fine young women, and who, no doubt, liked to live on a friendly and social footing with their young neighbours.

The Earl made many enquiries of Miss Moore about the female part of the Allright family, concluding with saying that he had often met the young man, who appeared to be a fine convivial fellow.

She said as she thought, that the young women were not remarkable for anything that she could either hear or perceive in the little time she had known them. But that the Earl, no doubt, would be a better judge of them than she was, and she would instantly dispatch a card requesting a ticket, with his permission.

To this he acceded, with many thanks.

Many and various were the conjectures in the steward's room as to this

visit.—Some said the young Earl was come to take possession and thrust Miss out of the Lodge and the fortune.

Great consternation prevailed, and my lord's valet was waited for with great impatience, in hopes something might be gathered from him, as to the why and the wherefore, of this visit. At length he made his *entree*.—He was a smart fashionable fellow, such as are generally about young men, who are more anxious that their servants should be up to every thing, than that they should be steady, sober, and honest. To know well how to parry a *dun*; to drink with the servants of other people, and so worm the secrets of the family out of them; and to be useful in managing a fashionable intrigue, are all the qualities required to form the character of a male domestic of an unmarried man of fashion. Such was Monsieur Dupré.

All

All were anxious to welcome him to the Lodge, and none more so than Mrs. Hall. She offered him, most assiduously, every sort of refreshment she could think of, saying she was never more rejoiced than to hear of the arrival of the young Earl: and she sincerely hoped he would not soon think of taking his departure.

Mons. Dupré said she was very obliging; it was hard to answer for his lord, for he set out for Carleton at a minute's warning, and might now be preparing to return to town, for aught he knew, as he had no orders.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Hall, "he is come to see Miss, and what title she has to her fortune. It is very natural for him to do so, to be certain. It was very unnatural of my lady to put by so sweet a young gentleman."

Now Mrs. Hall had not even caught a transient view of the Earl of Clifden;

but she thought, if he had the power to set aside Miss Bellingham's claims, and the cards should be dealt over again, she might profit by ingratiating herself into the good graces of the valet.

"Why we did expect snug lodgings here, to be sure, ma'am," replied he. "My lord's creditors were very busy in making out their bills, when her ladyship's death was announced, for I had always promised them on that event immediate payment. But we were all disappointed. I had the most cause to be sorry, for I manage all these matters. My lord only said, the old woman had swindled him and his creditors, and that they must either wait or put him in prison and be damned."

"Put him in prison! indeed," said the Housekeeper, "would they dare to put an Earl in prison?"

"My

“ My lord,” replied the valet, “ is not an English peer.”—He continued : “ They don’t care to pay much respect to persons, I’ll assure you in London : why we have been arrested five times in one week.”

The good old Steward turned up his eyes in surprize at the profligacy of the world. He said, that he supposed his lordship would be able to liquidate his debts, as the estate which had fallen to him with the title, though inadequate to his expectations, would, with economy and good nursing, produce a tolerable sum.

“ Why, so it may, Sir,” replied the valet, “ and I am sure it will be nursed well, for the lawyers will have it amongst them, and it will require the ingenuity of the old one himself, to get it out of their hands.”

Mr. Allen, though unacquainted with the chicanery of the lower order

and drudges in the profession, that infest the metropolis like locusts, to devour the simple and unwary, who fall an easy prey to their cunning, yet knew enough to convince him that Lord Clifden was a ruined man, if he had given up the estate of his ancestors to the management of those learned in the law.

Mr. Allen had been in the Clifden family from his earliest years. His first entrance into their employ had been as hind, to tend the cattle, from which low station, he had risen, by industry and integrity, to the one he now held with equal credit to himself, and profit to the family. And though he had ever considered the present heir as a dissipated, thoughtless young man, he could not bear to see the ancient name sink, without one struggle, into oblivion, not to say contempt. A secret wish came across his mind, that Lord
Clifden

Clifden would reform and marry the young lady who inherited the great fortune of Lady Levet. He could not find that this was a visit of hostility: perhaps the same sentiments might have struck the young gentleman. His mind being possessed with this idea, he drank to Mr. Dupré, "The union of the two families."

"Very good! very good!" said the valet, and returned the toast.

Mrs. Hall saw nothing of that confusion she had predicted, nor could she learn any hostility intended. She therefore left the steward's room to attend to the business of the family, as the arrival of company had set them all in motion.

The house exhibited nothing but happy and smiling faces.

CHAP. IX.

THE servant from the Lodge, sent in his note from Miss Moore to Miss Allright : who, when she had read it, ran breathless with joy to her father, with the animating intelligence, that the Earl of Clifden was arrived, and meant to grace their ball, having requested a ticket.

The old Banker did not seem so elated with the news as the female part of his family. However, all proper respect was to be paid, and he desired a ticket to be returned, accompanied by a letter from himself, expressive of his sense of the honour intended.

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The young Earl, Mr. Allright had occasion to know was somewhat out of suits with fortune, and might look upon the Lodge as a very pleasant country seat, especially when the beauty of the possessor of it was so evident. This

would effectually mar those golden dreams that had continually possessed his mind, of transplanting Miss Bellingham into his own family. He did not know but a title might be preferred by that lady, to all the wit and address of his son Frank. He wished he had not come to Carleton to disconcert his plans, which in his own ideas were so happily laid, as to almost ensure success. He believed Miss Moore would not hold out a long siege, whenever he declared himself: but he was determined not to fix himself with the encumbrances, without a certainty of gain equal to the risque of the speculation. Profit and loss must never be lost sight
of.

of. Therefore he determined to rest on his own oars, till he saw in which quarter the wind would fix.

Frank and the girls were highly delighted with this addition to a party, that they had thought in the morning could not admit of any alteration for the better.

All the females dressed at the title, and every one appropriated the conquest to herself. An early dinner gave leisure for the rest of the evening, being dedicated to the honours of the toilet.

At nine o'clock the house was opened for the reception of the company. Every thing was in order, and all in good humour, waiting the approach of their friends, particularly the party from the Lodge.

Miss Allright was almost out of patience, having sat shivering at the door of the anti-room more than half an hour, in order to receive her friends in style.

style. Her father had endeavoured to laugh her out of punishing herself, to shew she knew the etiquette of fashion. "Why half your company will wonder at your folly, and the other half will laugh at it." It did not signify, every thing was to be conducted in style, and a cold or a fever were puerile and secondary considerations.

At length came an inundation of friends, from all quarters. The country gentry were all on tip-toe for the appearance of the party from the Lodge. The city group were also apprized of the beauty of Miss Bellingham. Even the Allrights themselves had not seen Miss Archer. The old Citizen himself had been posted in one of the parlours, not to be deficient in politeness; and on the ladies alighting from their carriages, he desired to have the honour of presenting Miss Bellingham to
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the company. This however was denied him. The Earl said he had requested Miss Bellingham to chaperon him, and so he must be content to escort the other two ladies, if no one deprived him of that pleasure before he reached the top of the stairs: which on ascending, they were received by Miss Allright, who, on this evening, contrived to dress herself to great advantage. Her father presented herself and sisters to Lord Clifden, and then proceeded forward to introduce the ladies to the circle met, who viewed the young ladies with both admiration and envy. Frank soon contrived to place himself near Miss Bellingham, and to request the honour of her hand for the first two dances. This had been disposed of to Lord Clifden before; so Frank requested and obtained the reversion for the next two. Billy De-

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lany had engaged the hand of Miss Archer, so he was fain to take the first unengaged female.

Long before the dancing began, the rooms were so full, that no one could move; the stairs were groaning with their weight, and menaced a general overthrow, if they were not eased of the load. At length it was proposed to form a second set in the hall, as the suite of rooms below was reserved for the supper. Every thing being arranged, the ball commenced, by the Earl of Clifden leading Miss Bellingham to the top of the room; the rest of the company took their places, and the dance went on with great spirit.

After the two dances, Lord Clifden resigned the hand of Helen to Frank Allright, and led out his eldest sister, highly elated with the notice of her guest, as at this moment her admirer, Charles Waring, led in one of the beauties
most

most noticed at the county assembly, accompanied by Mrs. Lavington. The widow soon espied Miss Moore, and went to her, in order to satisfy her curiosity as to who was dancing with Miss Allright. At the name of her partner, Mrs. Lavington was struck with great surprize.—Miss Moore was by no means the person she could question, as to what had brought Lord Clifden amongst them: so she only bowed her head in thanks, and hastened to get information elsewhere. No one could tell the exact reason why he had come to Carleton, but conjecture soon fixed his motive to be, a desire to share Lady Levet's fortune with her favourite. Nay, some affirmed that the matter had been arranged between the guardians, previously to the present visit. It happened very well for the widow: for as she did *not chuse* to dance, she would have been left without

out a male companion, if Miss Allright had been disengaged, as it was Charles Waring piqued at this circumstance, said, he had hurt his knee the day before, and could not dance. Not a word of the accident had transpired previous to their entrance into the ball room. Miss Allright was in high spirits, as were all her guests, and the evening went off perfectly to the satisfaction of all parties, with this exception only, that Billy Delany was disconcerted when he found that he had made a trifling mistake in taking Miss Archer for her friend. This he did not find out, till they went to supper. The young ladies, when they first arrived, were standing together, when Billy asked Frank Allright to tell him which was the fortin? and he, out of fun, intentionally, informed him Miss Archer was she. Caroline, as to beauty, had the advantage of Helen; so he was
not

not long in securing the prize, nor would he easily give it up. He was obliged to change partners, according to the usual custom, but he engaged her for the two next dances, before he resigned her.

Miss Albina too had a terrible disaster, whilst sitting at supper, by the Lord, as she called him. A preposterously high ostrich feather caught fire, and soon communicated its flame to one of more humility, which waved beneath it. Every one anxious to prevent more mischief, tried to put out the flame. But Billy, more active than all the rest, and perhaps better informed as to the materials of which it was composed, instantly seized the whole head dress, and laid it at his feet, leaving his sister's bald pate for the inspection and amusement of the company, to whom it afforded an incessant roar of laughter, whilst poor Miss sat screaming,

ing, till Billy disengaged the feathers from the wig, and placed it again on her head, only putting the hind part in front. The poor lady at length retired, scolding her brother for troubling himself about her, and making fun for the company, whom she pronounced a pack of rude unfashionable wretches, who were unacquainted with the ton, or they would have known that in London such things are quite common. This accident gave quite a zest to the supper-table.

Miss Bellingham and her friend was admired by all. They received much attention from all the male part of the company, particularly from a Mr. Beaumont, who was a neighbouring gentleman, of very large fortune. He spoke much to Miss Moore of the beauty of her ward, and assured her that he should often, with her per-
mis-

mission, pay his respects at the Lodge ; that he would, in a short time, have a Housekeeper, at Broom Hall, and then he hoped to see them there.

Miss Moore replied, that she was happy to hear him say so, as she had often wished him a good wife. Oh ! returned he, with a bow, then it perhaps may be in your power to select such an one amongst your friends, madam, for I have not yet disposed of my heart, I assure you, that is, I had not this morning done so, said he, laughing. It is a sister who is so good as to visit me sometimes, that I meant when I alluded to my expectation of a female inmate in my family. The conversation was broken off, by the end of the dance, and Miss Bellingham declaring herself quite fatigued. Caroline was not in the least so ; and Mr. Beaumont offered himself for the next dance, which

which she gladly accepted; for as the evening advanced, so did her spirits brighten.

Mr. Allright had not been in the least deficient in his attentions to Miss Moore, and believed that nothing was wanting but his declaration of an intention of again entering into the holy state of matrimony, and of having selected her as the favourite object of his choice.

About four o'clock the company broke up. Those returned home who were not very far distant, and those who could not do so, scrambled for a bed where they could. Most of the men determined to return to the supper-room; and since they could not sleep, to toast their partners in bumpers.

The ladies of the Allright family returned home with Mrs. Lavington, who seemed the only discontented female of the party. None of the men had paid

particular attention to her, though she had acted over all her girlish airs, to attract their notice. No sooner had they got into the coach, than she said, "Well, I'm glad your gala is over; I never saw any thing so hum drum. These things don't do out of London; there, there is such a succession of company, that one hardly ever sees the same face twice in an evening. There is such a dear delightful set, that one never tires."

Miss Allright, highly piqued at the assertion, that her party wanted fashion; and the more so perhaps that she was conscious of the truth of the remark, replied, "I am sure, Mrs. Lavington, you was not always of such fashionable parties in town, for when you lived in Pudding-lane, my father told us of a hop he went to at your house, where the company, many of them, came in pattens, and their husbands

bands and brothers retired to an inner room, to put on white stockings and dancing pumps."

"Oh, aye," said Marian, "I remember how we all laughed at the tallow-candles being fixed in save-alls, and nailed to a cross piece of deal, contrived for the purpose, to light the ball-room."

"Your father and you too have very excellent memories," replied the widow, "for I recollect no such thing.—Perhaps there might have been such doings amongst my servants, but I could never have presided over it."

"That you did," said Miss Allright, "for Father said he danced with you, till he was so hot, that he was fain to put his wig in his pocket, and tye a handkerchief over his head."

At this all the three ladies burst into a loud laugh. Mrs. Lavington said, if she pleased, she could recount anec-

dotes of their own family, that might equally excite the risibility of their muscles; but she was too fatigued with witnessing the nonsense of the evening, to enter on the task just then.

The Allrights were sensible that this might be very true, and not willing to provoke the widow any farther, asked her how she liked the Peer?—Mrs. Lavington thought him an elegant young man, and quite the thing to match with Miss Bellingham. She was quite happy that all possibility of difference was removed by such a happy arrangement.

Miss Allright had heard of no such arrangement, and had been all the evening spreading forth every attraction to allure the heart of Lord Clifden, and saw him depart impressed with the hope, that her endeavours had not been altogether fruitless.

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This assertion greatly disconcerted her, as she now supposed Mrs. Lavington knew more of the family concerns than she herself did, and questioned her as to the intended match.

The Widow assured her she had it from good and undoubted authority, that all preliminaries were settled, and that nothing was now wanting to complete the business, but the expiration of the term of Miss Bellingham's mourning.

On reaching home, Mrs. Lavington soon retired, leaving the Allrights to muse upon her news. She knew it would not please them to hear of this obscure girl's being about to obtain rank as well as fortune, whilst they must exhibit themselves another winter or two, and then, perhaps, sink into the wives of men on a level with themselves.

The party from the Lodge returned, highly pleased with their evening's amusement. The two young ladies declared it was delightful. Lord Clifden thought that the old Banker looked much more respectable when backed by his family, than when he had first the pleasure of being introduced to him, by Shadrack Moses the good Jew, whom he employed to hunt out money for him.

"I suppose Allright is worth more than a plumb and a half," said he to Miss Moore; "and I assure you, madam, he said so many fine things of you, that I'm inclined to think, he will propose your removal to St. Mary Axe very soon."

She laughed at the joke, as did the young ladies. They soon separated for the night.

Lord Clifden was by no means disposed to sleep, so busy was his mind in canvassing the different scenes through
which

which he had passed in the course of forty-eight hours ; for it was hardly more than this period since he had determined on his present visit, the intention of which was, when he left town, to see Miss Bellingham, in order to make enquiry into the mystery that enveloped her birth, and if he could penetrate it, and found nothing at which his pride might revolt, to offer himself as a suitor and to marry her. A refusal was a thing impossible, and the desperate state of his affairs, made it as necessary for the present, as it had been for the late Earl, to adjust them, for his creditors would wait no longer.

No good friend appeared to place a government within his grasp, so a wife or disgrace must be the alternative ; such a one as the present rage for dissipation places before many a sprig of quality of the present day.

This thought was not of his own suggestion, but that of his valet Mons. Dupré, whose fertile brain had run through all probable resources, before he resolved on recommending matrimony. However, as a fine fortune had slipped through his master's pockets, (or, indeed, had never slipped into them but in idea,) and had fallen into the lap of a country rustic, why it might be as well to look after it, and then my lady might be left to vegetate on the estate, whilst his Lordship and himself amused themselves in the capital, or wherever the sons and daughters of dissipation raised a temple.

It was immediately after a very severe harass of the creditors, and much threatening, that Dupré ventured to suggest the expediency of the journey to Carleton. His Lordship only laughed at the proposal at first, but so many urgent reasons were laid before him,
that

that at last the proposal did not wear a face of improbability, provided, any thing of the Lady's birth could be ascertained.

Now this did not strike the Frenchman quite so forcibly as it did his lordship. Dupré undertook to know all about her before he had been in the family two days, nay, in a very few hours. He suggested another reason for leaving town as soon as possible. He had seen some gentlemen passing to and fro through the street in which they then resided, with large wigs and sticks in their hands, a dress he considered as very inauspicious to the liberty of the subject, and therefore the sooner they decamped the better.

Having settled in his mind where to raise the ready for the journey, he informed his Lord of the Speculation, and only waited his determination to be in an instant in motion.

All these reasons concurring to urge him to the visit, which might terminate, as he himself chose after all, he said, " Well, Dupré, manage the business with your usual dexterity, and I am off, after the opera, for the old woman's estate, though she had not the grace ever to invite me in her life time, and if I like it, why I'll take it with all incumbrances."

Dupré managed with great expedition the money concerns, by going to a creditor, whose patience had been exhausted long ago, (with much joy in his countenance) and informing him, that now he would be paid, as Lord Clifden was going to marry the richest heiress in Britain ; but, that before his bill was settled, he must give his Lordship credit for some trinkets to present the Lady with, as the matter was settled beyond a doubt.

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This, Dupré pawned his honour, was the case, and though he had often done this in support of similar falsehoods, yet he put on such an air of plausibility, that the Jeweller (who knew the price he should put upon the articles was no object) determined to assist the virtuous endeavours of his Lordship to discharge the many bills and bonds he had already locked up in his iron chest.

Dupré selected a few elegant trifles, not being so anxious about the fashion, as the value his friend Tricket, the pawnbroker in the next street, might place on them was the most consequence, as these were to be deposited, with many of the same kind, under his care, for scarcely one third of their value.

All matters being finally settled by the time the opera broke up, and Monsieur quietly seated in a chaise and

four, at the top of St. James's-street, as had been agreed on, they proceeded on their journey with all the speed possible, except that towards morning Lord Clifden took a few hours rest that he might not frighten Miss Bellingham by his haggard and uncouth appearance; and after dressing in an elegant travelling dress, and mounting Monsieur on a post horse, arrived at the Lodge, where he was much pleased with the appearance of the young lady, though he readily perceived that she wanted the *agreements* of fashion to make her quite to his taste.

This he thought she might acquire, but who was she? This was the point in question, and he resolved, if possible, to put her birth beyond a doubt, before he made any farther advances.

He was delighted to hear of the Citizen's ball, as there, somewhere between jest and earnest, he might try to
come

come at the opinion of the country visitors; some of whom might know more than he did of this matter. Indeed it was impossible to know less of it if they had heard any thing on the subject. However, he had not been very successful there, as no one would enter upon the topic, farther than saying she was very beautiful, except Mr. Allright, who, upon being asked by the Earl what he thought of the old girl's forgetting him in her will, answered, no doubt her Ladyship knew who were her nearest relations. It was not for him to hazard an opinion on the subject.

Lord Clifden understood the insinuation, and readily gave credit to its meaning. He did not chuse to go any farther then, but as he believed the Citizen knew more than he then chose to utter, he determined at a more quiet season, on again endeavouring to get the secret out of him.

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On his return, he wished to know how far his valet had been successful in his absence; and, on enquiry, found that Mrs. Hall had assured him, upon his promise of keeping all she should trust him with a profound secret, that her deceased Lady was, undoubtedly, the mother of the young lady in question, as she knew the person who attended her during her confinement, and that a domestic of the late Earl's family, knew who was the father; though Mrs. Hall did not know what was become of the man. He did not continue in servitude long after the birth of Miss; those who provided so well for her, could provide as well for her father, whom, no doubt, she had put out of the way to conceal her own imprudence.

This information, together with the hint given at the ball, was proof enough for the young Peer, and he sighed to think that all his visions of re-establish-
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ing his fallen fortune, must evaporate in air, and he himself return to town the victim of his own folly.

Dupré began to praise Miss Bellingham highly, and said that the old Steward wished his Lordship united to her with all his heart.

“Perhaps, Dupré,” replied his Lordship, “*he* may be related to the family.—But I can never marry any woman who is ignorant from whom she is descended. I have committed many follies, but I will steer clear of placing any stigma on my family. It shall never be said, that I have placed the seal of legality on the misconduct of Lady Levett.

“I desire you no more to speak of this affair. My visit will terminate as a matter of compliment.”

“True, my Lord,” replied his valet, who had forgotten his station in the repeated familiarity of his master, “but I
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am afraid, on our return, we shall be troubled with those whose visit will not terminate in so complimentary a manner."

Dupré recollected the many lies and oaths he had pledged to the Jeweller, and knew not what way he should bring himself off.

Lord Clifden told his valet he might leave him, since he did not chuse to reply as he ought to have done ; but was at a loss what expedient he should take in so desperate an emergency.

After revolving over and over the many disagreeable circumstances, he had to encounter, he could only blame himself for running the mad career of dissipation without once starting any glimpse of hope towards extrication, he therefore went to bed dispirited and dissatisfied.

Not so the two young ladies. They had never spent so delightful an evening before ;

fore ; and if sleep deserted their eyelids, it was, that busy though acted over and over again the past scene.

It was not till an hour later than usual, the next morning, that Sarah Mason, who was by Helen reinstated in her place, undrew the curtains of the bed, to tell them that two 'Squires' had been to call on them, and that my Lord was gone to the Grove to breakfast.

" Who were the 'Squires?'" asked Caroline.

" I doesn't know, but I'll go and ax the Steward, who met them at the Lodge."

Away she ran, and returned with two cards in her hand. One was Mr. Beaumont's, and the other Mr. Delany's.

The ladies spent the morning in talking over the night's amusement, till two o'clock, when a large party of
young

young men returned with Lord Clifden to enquire after their health.

His Lordship apologized for not waiting to breakfast with them, but taking a stroll beyond the Lodge-gate, he was overtaken by the Miss Allrights, who insisted on his returning home with them, and he could not resist the importunity of the Graces in union.

Frank Allright bowed at this compliment, which no doubt he carried home with him.

During the time his Lordship staid at the Grove House, the ladies alternately assailed him with all the powers of attraction of which they were in any way possessed ; and very fortunately for them, they were not unsuccessfully displayed.

Miss Allright he began to think tolerable, provided the old man would unlock the iron chest, and therefore,

as

as no time was to be lost, he took an opportunity of joining Mr. Allright, who was walking alone in his shrubbery before the window of the room in which they were sitting. He took occasion to extol and admire the taste of the ladies, in the conduct of their last night's fête; and told the old Cit he must not expect long to be blessed with so much beauty and accomplishments, as no doubt the ladies soon would, if they had not already, select some among their numerous lovers, on whom to bestow their affections.

Mr. Allright replied, that he had not yet heard of any particular favourite. He could not however say but he should be glad to be rid of the trouble of attending to the vagaries of three giddy girls.

This certainly was an opening for Lord Clifden to have offered his services to one of them, but his Lordship had not,

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at that particular moment, come to any particular and fixed determination, as to which of the beauties he should like for a helpmate ; or indeed, if he should chuse either of them for this dignified station ; so he passed it off by saying, he was the only man in the kingdom who would not be proud to attend on them.

He himself conceived that Miss Allright had no time to lose ; and that therefore a coronet would be a bait that would soonest take with her, and that the old Banker himself might the easier yield to these considerations.

He again joined the ladies on the lawn, and after walking an hour with them, he determined to fall desperately in love with the eldest.

Before his Lordship left the Grove, he had contrived to render his attentions so particular, that Miss Allright returned in the highest spirits to dress
for

for dinner, to which his Lordship had been most pressingly invited, but had wisely declined, promising to see them again the next day if he did not return to town too early, and then took his leave.

The Ladies at dinner time were lavish in his praise, but as his particularity to Miss Allright, deprived the other two of any hopes, they only joined her violent commendations.

Frank said he believed that he should soon be related to the Peer, if his sister was as far gone as she seemed to be, for his Lordship had owned himself enraptured with her.

“What is his rent roll?” asked the father.

To this question no reply was given. He added, “Louisa will want fine houses, and fine coaches, and a good allowance of pin-money, and how is this to be got at without an estate?”

Louisa

Louisa replied, that she never heard of a Lord but could get all these if he pleased.

“ Can they, indeed ! Why I know a great many Lords that would please to have a good estate, if they knew how to get at it,” added her father ; “ however, to be sure, Lord Clifden is a very fine young man, of a very ancient and respectable family, and being so, he may marry a lady of large fortune, and so get his estate free from embarrassments.”

“ Is it a large one ?” asked Miss All-right.

“ It was tolerably so once, but I know a man who can make a great part of it his own, if he has not done so already.”

This her father said with a nod and one of his significant looks, which his daughter construed into—I am the man—as she had heard her father talk of money

money transactions having passed between them through the medium of a city friend. She therefore determined, if Lord Clifden declared himself, that he should not wear the willow. She enumerated, with the possession of a coronet, all the splendid distinctions thereunto annexed.

Lord Clifden knew that the Banker was rich, and that he loved money too well to countenance his addresses, without the usual appendages to such unions, settlements, and all the other douceurs.

Situated as he was, he had then only one game to play, and he did not doubt of its success. But the Banker's idol was wanting to carry even this into execution.—He revolved in his own mind every possible advantage, and disadvantage, and could not but sigh, when he reflected on the mad career he had run, and from which nothing could extricate

cate him, but a step which might involve still greater difficulties.

To think, he had not been accustomed, and he found the effort most painful. Therefore, though in company with the ladies, he drank a few glasses more than usual, and after they retired, he wrote a famous epistle to Miss Allright, descriptive of the violence of his passion, and lamenting the present deranged state of his affairs, which only wanted a little attention, and so charming an assistant as herself to put quite to rights, and concluded with a proposal to quit the kingdom, should her affections not be in her power to bestow.

He entreated to be honoured with an hour's conversation in the course of next morning, which should determine all his future hopes of happiness.—Dupré was trusted with the delivery of
this

this declaration, and brought back a favourable answer.

His Lordship would not have mentioned a word of embarrassments, but he knew the Banker was too well acquainted with them to be any secret in his family.

However it was managed, certainly the lady did not take this avowal of his Lordship's involved circumstances amiss; for on the second morning from the delivery of the letter, at half past two o'clock, Miss Allright entrusted her person, in a post chaise and four, to the care of Lord Clifden, attended by his trusty friend and servant Mons. Dupré, and they made the best of their way to that spot, which is said to render every one happy, at least for a time. They had no confidants, so were sure of not being betrayed.

It is thought that the lady must have removed all difficulties, as to the ways

and means, as his Lordship had no visible sign about him by which he could render the road so smooth and pleasant as is necessary on such occasions.

Lord Clifden left a letter of apology to Miss Moore and Miss Bellingham for the precipitate manner in which he had left the Lodge, and pleaded almighty love as his excuse, saying that he hoped that when he returned to town, Miss Bellingham would seal her forgiveness by a visit to Lady Clifden.

Helen was in the breakfast parlour first, and seeing a letter addressed to her, rather an uncommon thing, broke the seal and read it, yet could not make it out.

Miss Moore coming down, Helen applied to her to know what it meant. She could not tell exactly, but knew enough of the world to comprehend that

that his Lordship was making a clandestine match with some one. It struck her immediately that Caroline must be the object of his attachment, as she could have no suspicion of the Allright family.—“How unfortunate!” she exclaimed.

“What is the matter?” asked Helen.

“I am sorry to tell you, my love, Miss Archer has eloped with Lord Clifden.”—“What will become of them?” added Miss Moore.

Helen assured her that this was not the case, for Caroline was in her room when she left it.

She at this instant opened the door, exclaiming, “What do you think, Miss Allright has been run away with. Mrs. Hall has just told me so.”

Miss Moore was filled with astonishment and alarm: though her mind

was greatly relieved by finding that the family at the Lodge would escape censure.

The conversation at breakfast naturally turned on the subject that had surprized them. Miss Moore took occasion to animadvert strongly on the impropriety and indelicacy of a young lady's taking such a step. What esteem, she said, could a man entertain for a woman, who, in the first instance, violated the first principle in nature? Might she not hold as lightly her vowed obedience to him afterwards? What pledge had he for her performance of engagements whose commencement originated in deception? If she could be brought to think lightly of the agony of a parent's heart on such an occasion, he could not be certain but she might in time condemn her husband to feel the same sensations whenever caprice should present an opportunity. No man could,
she

she was persuaded, (who studied his future domestic peace) induce any woman to outstep the bounds of propriety so far ; for no love could be permanent and lasting, that was not founded on esteem. However vanity might for a time blind a man, yet he would find moments of asperity when this would not be forgotten. And even supposing the lady did (as was seldom the case) lead, after this first violation of her duty, an exemplary life, might not the husband, from example or dissipation of the times, be led into improprieties ? How could she reprehend him for a violation of his duty, and feel that their union commenced with that of a total disregard of her own ? Who could be so attentive to the particular interest of a child as a parent ? By this step a woman put herself in the power of a man, with whom, for the

most part, she was unacquainted, except by the common forms and principles of good breeding; if he was unprincipled, what years of misery might she not entail on herself?

Here Miss Moore was interrupted by the arrival of Frank Allright, who, after seating himself, said, he supposed the ladies were acquainted with the occasion of his early visit? They bowed assent. He said his father had desired him to wait on Miss Moore to know at what hour Lord Clifden left the Lodge?

To this question she could give no answer, as she had, when she came down, expected to meet his Lordship in the breakfast parlour. The first intimation she received to the contrary, originated in a letter which Miss Bellingham had just presented for her perusal.

She

She rang for Mrs. Hall, and ordered her to make enquiries amongst the servants.

Mrs. Hall did not remain long in executing this commission.

She returned, saying, that neither his Lordship or his man had been in bed that night, and that they must have taken an opportunity to go out unobserved before the doors were locked. Mrs. Hall added, that she knew Monsieur had been to Carleton; and had sent a man, as he said, to order a post chaise for his master, who intended returning to London the next morning.

With this information Frank returned to his father, who was almost choaked with rage: whilst Frank, when out of his presence, was exulting that he had got a Peer for a brother-in-law, and might get in time into the dashing societies.

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The elopement was not taken so easily by Miss Marian and Miss Sophia. They were drowned in tears, that it had not been their lot instead of their sister's.

Mr. Allright shut himself up in his study, in order to turn in his brain to what possible consolation or advantage his daughter's indiscretion might be turned.—None that he could devise.—Lord Clifden was a ruined spendthrift.—Had he been a man of business, or could he be turned into one, it might be possible to do something.

At length a glimpse of light broke upon his bewildered fancy.—Part with any ready cash he could not think of.—He determined to *seem* to buy up a mortgage his friend Shadrack Moses had upon his Lordship's estate. He knew that the money had been advanced by himself, through the intervention of a third person, as he was not
able,

able, in his own character, to exact such hard terms from his Lordship. And as they could not exist on air, why he would make a virtue of necessity, and have the estate settled upon his daughter and her children.

This determination composed the agitated spirits of the man who always reckoned on cent per cent in all his bargains. However he intended to act at last, he must not relax in his displeasure, least the rest of the family should make as hopeful a choice as Miss Allright had done, who had added honours, if not riches, to the family, and with these he must now be contented.

Frank interrupted his father's reveries, with all the information he had been able to collect: which amounted to no more than he knew before, that Lord Clifden had carried off his sister, and that it was most likely they were on the way to Gretna Green.

“ They

“ They may go to the devil, for all I care about them. I wish all the women in the world were as severely punished for their disobedience as Louisa will be.—I don’t know how I came to be so silly to admit a beggar of quality into my family.”

“ Why,” replied Frank, “ I don’t think he has taken any great bargain out of it, father. My sister is no chicken, and if you don’t help them out, he will have the worst of it, I think.”

Mr. Allright flew into a violent passion with his son for supposing he would advance a single guinea. And at the same time, warned him not to intrude his opinions unasked, but to look to his own conduct, and advise his sisters to do the same. If they gave him any more trouble he would marry himself.

Frank left the room immediately to conceal a stifled laugh, which burst forth

forth as soon as he had got to a convenient distance from the study. He informed his sisters of the resolution of their father. They were shocked at his declared intention of doing nothing for Louisa, and her Lord. They had been planning the prettiest dresses imaginable, in which they were to attend their sister now she was a Countess. They had settled all the appendages of dress for her; and to be baulked in this their first outset, in high life, was abominable. It was impossible for them to visit if papa was inexorable, and they knew of nothing so likely as that he would continue in this state of mind.

Mrs. Lavington arrived in the greatest agitation, out of breath with sorrow and apprehensions for her dear, dear, Louisa; as she had been informed that Lord Clifden had not a guinea of his own left. That he had not a house,
no,

no, not even a lodging, to take her dear friend to.

She enquired for Mr. Allright, and said she must see him, to use her endeavours for the young couple, who were, no doubt, ruined beyond all hopes of recovery ; but surely he would take them in.

Now, instead of sorrow, her heart was elate with joy, to hear that, though Louisa had got a title and the start of her, yet, she had nothing to support this proud pre-eminence.

Mr. Allright refused to see the Widow, with whom he was too well acquainted to believe she paid her visit on any other score than that of curiosity, to learn how far he meant to go in his resentment, and then to drive round the country with her news, from undoubted authority.

The young ladies acted over the farce grief for their sister's extreme indiscretion,

cretion, but allowed that the many attractions of Lord Clifden, and his seeming affection for their sister, was some excuse; as she lost her heart at first sight of the Peer.

Mrs. Lavington observed, that love and madness were always said to be in very near alliance, and, in this case, to be sure the two passions had come in very close contact. She sincerely hoped, that Mr. Allright would not drive them altogether to despair. And then took her leave, to make a morning visit at the Lodge, to know how the elopement was taken there; for there could not be the smallest doubt, but it had been expected the Earl's attentions would have been directed towards the Heiress.

She found the ladies seated in great tranquillity at work; nor did any one of them attempt to start the subject.—After Mrs. Lavington had waited as

long as her patience would let her, she said that she had been paying a melancholy visit at the Grove. Poor Mr. Allright was inconsolable, and could not see any company. The young ladies were also overwhelmed with distress on their sister's imprudent conduct.

Miss Moore said, she was very sorry for the great confusion into which the family had been thrown, particularly as Lord Clifden was their visitor ; but she hoped a reconciliation might be brought about, as certainly his Lordship was of an ancient and respectable family.

“ But, my dear Madam,” returned Mrs. Lavington, “ he has not a guinea to reward the ringers, if he returns hither.”

“ Hasn't he ?” said Helen, “ well, then I will pay them ; they shant want a good peal if they come here.”

The ladies laughed at the innocence and eagerness of Helen's reply.

"Why, indeed, Miss Bellingham, your fortune would be very useful, I am sure, to Lord Clifden. Every one here believed that he came to pay his addresses to you."

"Every one did me a great deal of honour," said Miss Bellingham, "I had no such ideas. But as far as I am able, with the approbation of Miss Moore, and Dr. Jackson, I shall be happy to serve Lord Clifden, as the relation of my good benefactress."

Miss Moore bowed her head to Helen for the compliment paid to her advice, but said no more on the subject.

Mrs. Lavington was disappointed here, for, instead of finding the torch of envy lighted up, she found tranquility and benevolence. She took her leave, wondering at the virtues she could not copy, nor, indeed, had any concep-

conception were in existence. The loss of a fine young man, with a coronet to bestow, in Helen's situation, she could not have borne, therefore she sat down to art her seeming kindness, natural it could not be, for she felt nothing like it.

END OF VOL. I.





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